17 JANUARY 2015

NME

MARK RONSON
HOW 'UPTOWN FUNK' SAVED HIS CAREER

SLEATER-KINNEY
EXCLUSIVE COMEBACK INTERVIEW

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN
INDIE GODS GO EUROPOP

"I CAN'T LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE ED SHEERAN IS HEADLINING WEMBLEY"

NOEL GALLAGHER
THE WORLD IN BLACK & WHITE

+
SLIPKNOT
PJ HARVEY
DRENGE
MARILYN MANSON
BILLY CORGAN

"As long as my face is on page one, I don't care what they say about me on page 17" MICK JAGGER

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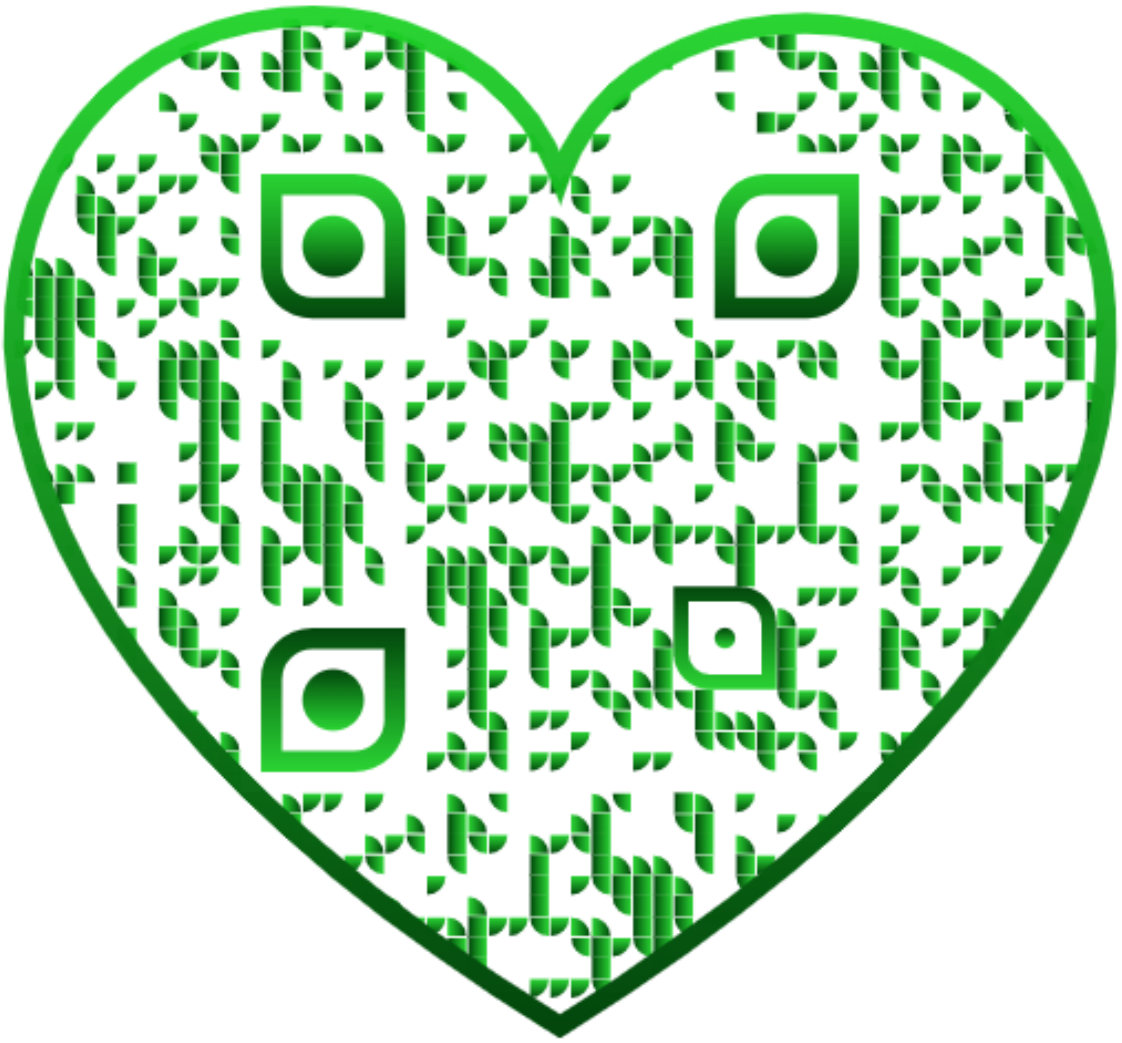

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COVER: SHAMIL TANNA

SOUNDING OFF

TELL US WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND

Answering you this week: Tom Howard

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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MOZ FOR GODLIKE?

I cannot help but feel that Morrissey's legacy and stature as a contemporary artist is being overlooked by most of the press, including *NME*. Johnny Marr, by contrast, is constantly being acclaimed for his new work and influence, and has been crowned *NME*'s Godlike Genius. Marr's influence on guitar playing is undeniable, but it's nothing compared to Morrissey's influence both culturally and musically. I know I'll be criticised for comparing the two, but considering that both have launched solo careers, making the comparison can be excused. Morrissey's contemporary work is equal to his best, and the fact that it has been overlooked is criminal. 'World Peace Is None of Your Business' went to Number Two in the charts but he still received minimal press recognition. There is an innate prejudice against him. The More You Ignore Him, The Closer He Will Get.
Charlie Hill, via email

Tom Howard: Well, this is a first. Never before in the history of *NME* have we been accused of not covering Morrissey enough. I like it. I suspect, Charlie, that your grievances are born from the fact that he's a difficult person to pin down. Such is his unpredictability that trying to arrange an interview with him is about as straightforward as the man himself. But you no doubt saw our 9/10 review of 'World Peace...' and the in-depth story of the album we published in July, because we wholeheartedly agree that it's up there with his best work. And as the 30th anniversary of 'Meat Is Murder' approaches, we will be reminded about the great man's cultural impact, not least for that record inspiring a generation to go vegetarian. Time to start the petition for him to be crowned *NME*'s Godlike Genius, perhaps?

WHAT, NO MILK MUSIC?

To paraphrase Morrissey, Christmas and New Year is not the time for trading slaps. In this spirit, I have deleted my 2,000-word moan regarding *NME*'s Greatest Albums Of The Decade... So Far feature. And to further the spirit of positivity now living inside of me, I would like to offer the Milk Music (right) album 'Cruise Your Illusion' as an add-on and pointer for readers who may have overlooked it, or are unaware it even exists. This album contains some truly beautiful stuff, and if records are measured on emotion and feeling, it needs to be given some consideration. The track 'Illegal And Free' has to be one of the most emotive tunes from any decade.
Neil Porter, via email

TH: There was, Neil, considerable debate in the office (led most forcefully by *NME*'s New Music Editor, Matt Wilkinson) about whether or not Milk Music should be included. Weirdly, though, it was 'Beyond Living' that he was pushing for, which was left off in the end because it's technically an EP. Your letter just goes to show they've released a load of music that's made an impact. Did you see that they're playing at Jewel's Catch One nightclub in LA on March 1? The comeback is on. Get saving.

MONKEYS SEE, MONKEYS DO

Mark Beaumont's attempt to heave Arctic Monkeys' 'AM' onto its lofty perch on the shoulders of redundant class-war rhetoric was misguided. One of the tracks came on the radio the other day. My son thought it was 'R U Mine?', my daughter thought it was 'One For The Road', but it was 'Why'd You Only Call Me When You're High?'. To quote comedian Milton Jones, "someone's gotta tell 'em".
Mark Scott, via email

TH: What you seem to be suggesting here, Mark, is that all the songs on 'AM' sound the same. I respectfully put it to you that that is a good thing. Look at the Ramones, or AC/DC: both bands who've done great things within strict parameters. Same goes for the Monkeys on 'AM'. They found a sound and stuck with it. Also, you, your son and your daughter all knew who Arctic Monkeys were when they came on the radio. Like all the best all-time-great indie heroes, they've infiltrated the mainstream.

LONDON FALLING

The 12 Bar is closing. Tin Pan Alley is for the chop. Fabric narrowly avoided closing its doors, but Plastic People wasn't so lucky. Aggressive development of (no doubt unaffordable) housing is squeezing us dry. I am grimly looking forward to the day when all these flats and apartments remain empty because there are no good reasons to actually live there. Those idiots went and built places to live but at the cost of removing all the life.
Alex Riding, via email

TH: It's an outrage, Alex. Hopefully, once these apartments become impossible to fill because no-one can afford (or wants) to live there, we can convert them back into the cathedrals of creativity they're supposed to be.

QUICKFIRE ROUND

What's happened to Friendly Fires? Has the fire gone out (crap pun, sorry)? Get on the case, *NME*; it's been nearly four years since the last album from Ed and the boys.
Nick Korda, via email

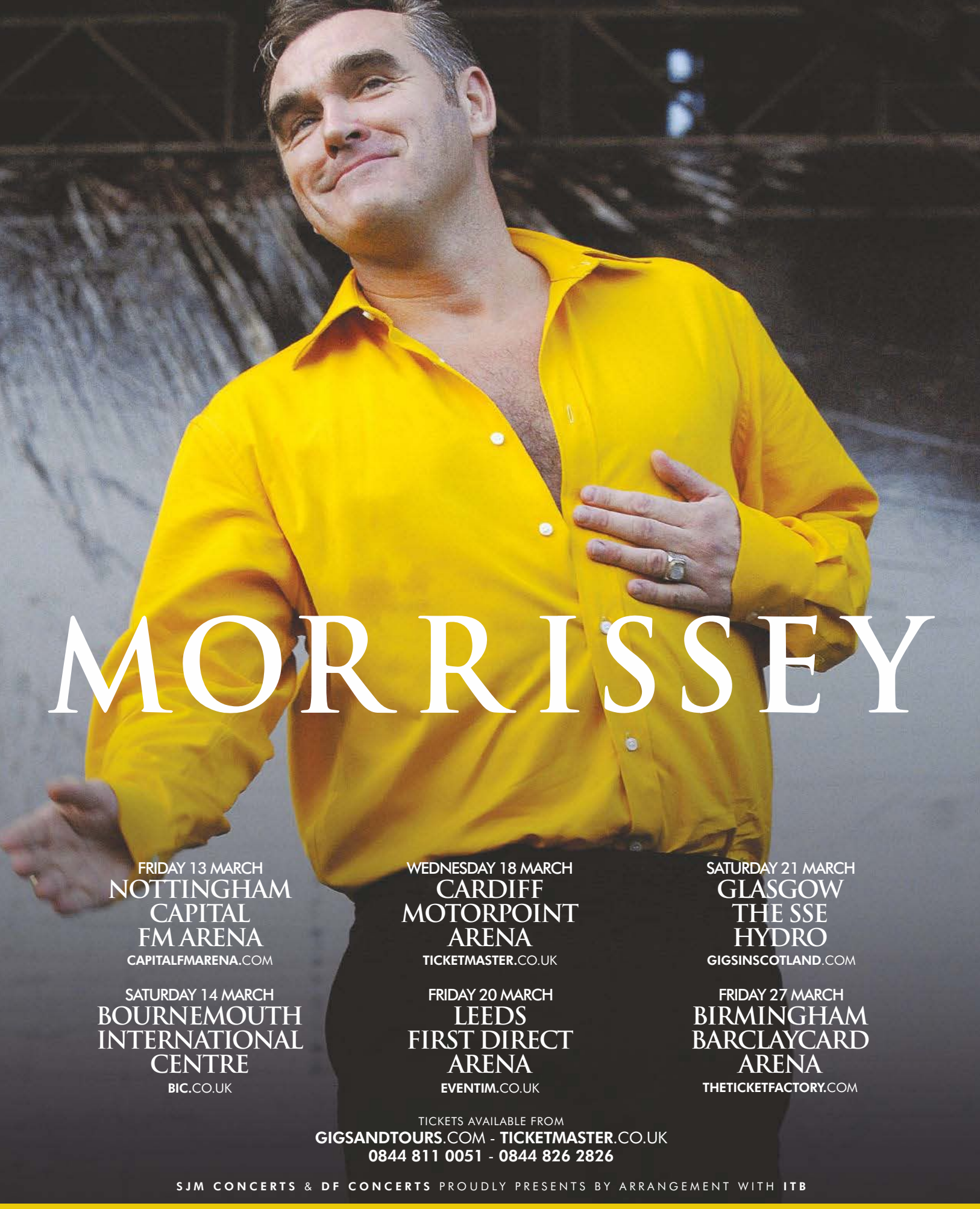
Simple question. What has happened to the best singer in the world, Richard Ashcroft?
Andrew Grund, via email

TH: Nick, I can officially pass on the rumour that Friendly Fires are in the process of recording an album. Don't tell anyone. Andrew, Ashcroft is about, but he's keeping it low key. Last November he played at Party In The Park in Dubai, his first show since Latitude in 2013. He left the stage saying "see you next year". That year is upon us.

LOOK WHO'S STALKING

My daughter Alice with Debbie Harry at the Esbjerg Rock Festival in Denmark. Great pic!
Marcus Villainy, via email

ANDY HUGHES, RICHARD JOHNSON, DEAN CHALKLEY



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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

1. Yak
Hungry Heart

Having built their reputation on raw and intense live shows, London trio Yak prove they're just as fiery on record. Debut single 'Hungry Heart' is a psychedelic onslaught that has frontman Oli Burslem declaring "*this hungry heart never ever knows when to stop*" while bassist and drummer Elliott Rawson and Andy Jones build a rhythm that teeters on the edge of implosion.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

2. Sundara Karma
Loveblood

With a first single titled 'Indigo Puff' and a band name that George Harrison would be proud of, Reading foursome Sundara Karma are making the most mystical form of indie since Kula Shaker. But don't let that put you off – with an average age of 18, they're a far more exciting prospect, with salacious lyrics ("*The thunder from her thighs makes me shake*") you can chuckle along to coupled with heavy drums and celestial keys.

Eve Barlow, writer

3. Joey Bada$$ feat. Kiesza
Teach Me

Shortly after being arrested in Australia for assaulting a security guard, Joey Bada$$ releases the latest track from his upcoming debut album 'B4.DA.$$'. The Chuck Strangers-produced song sees the 19-year-old rap about learning to dance over an uptempo party beat. It's a radio-friendly tune that will win him mainstream fans – although with Barack Obama's daughter Malia rumoured to be among them, he's already on his way.

Nadia Khomami, Acting News Reporter

4. Years & Years
King

Legions of industry sages are predicting big things for Years & Years in 2015, and fair enough – they're leaping out of the blocks here. Last year's 'Take Shelter' and 'Desire' were perfectly poised pop, but 'King' might be the London trio's best yet, a fluid Balearic joy that turns synths into panpipes, works up a polite rave build and showcases Olly Alexander's supple voice, flipping between falsetto and soulful burr. They're ones to watch, alright.

Matthew Horton, writer

5. A$AP Rocky
Lord Pretty Flacko Jodye 2

The sequel to 'Pretty Flacko', the single A$AP Rocky released in January 2013, 'Lord Pretty Flacko Jodye 2' rides in on a piercing synth line that sounds like an air-raid siren. This is more chilled than the first track though, the Harlem rapper returning after a quiet 2014 to nonchalantly reassert his reputation. "*I gotta let 'em know what's really trill*", he goes over a thick, simple beat from producers Nez & Rio.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

6. Action Bronson
Actin' Crazy

At the start of 'Actin' Crazy', Action Bronson sounds like he can't be bothered. "*Uh, yeah*", he grunts, as if he's just woken up. His languor doesn't last. Taken from new album 'Mr Wonderful', 'Actin' Crazy' is dark, imposing and exciting. "*I feel so alive I think I shit myself*", he raps over a swampy beat from Drake's right-hand man Noah '40' Shebib. "*Opportunity be knockin'*". Don't bet against him.

Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

7. Jackson Scott
Pacify

North Carolina singer-songwriter Jackson Scott says his comeback single is about "being happy even when surrounded by total dissonance". 'Pacify' embodies that idea with its skipping melodies smothered in harsh fuzz, his joy cutting through the noise. In leaving behind the intimate sound of 2013 debut 'Melbourne', Scott has landed on something affecting. 'Sunshine Redux', his imminent second record, looks a tasty proposition.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

8. Marina And The Diamonds
Immortal

Before the lipgloss-slicked flamboyance of Charli XCX started hogging the limelight in bubblegum pop land, there was Marina Diamandis. In 2015, the original millennial pop-art chart princess returns, but on 'Immortal' her fluffy feather boa has been firmly packed away. A deliciously downbeat ballad that sees Marina crooning "*everybody dies*" like Lana Del Rey by way of doomed opera diva Maria Callas, this is a special kind of sadness.

Leonie Cooper, writer

9. Django Django
First Light

Without the monks, madrigals and licked crisp packets favoured by Alt-J, Django Django are the everyman face of art-school jerktronica. Here, the London-based foursome trail their second album with a fidgety curio that inches their close-harmony pop into New Order, Depeche Mode and Hurts' arena-synth territory. Enormousness might well happen, too, if there's much more of this brilliance up their matching gold trouser legs.

Mark Beaumont, writer

10. Purity Ring
Begin Again

On the second song to be taken from 'Another Eternity', the follow-up to 2012's 'Shrines', Purity Ring yoke a love song built on interplanetary metaphor ("*You'll be the moon/I'll be the earth*") to high-pitched synths and stuttering percussion of fairly cosmic proportions. It's a much more open-hearted, bright foray than anything previously, and one that should put them in the same league as Chvrches and Little Dragon when they do it live.

Laura Snapes, Features Editor

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

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11. Cat's Eyes
Opening Credit – The Duke Of Burgundy

Cat's Eyes return with a grandiose homage to the undisputed king of grandiose soundtracks, Ennio Morricone. Made for new arthouse film *The Duke Of Burgundy*, the track also sees Faris Badwan and Rachel Zeffira unleash the ghost of Serge Gainsbourg, with Zeffira's breathy vocal (no croon from Faris, sadly) uncannily recalling Jane Birkin.
Matt Wilkinson, New Music Editor

12. Krill
Foot

Like a dilapidated Q And Not U, Boston trio Krill's new single 'Foot' jerks and twitches around in awkward jangles of stop-start guitars and trembling vocals about wanting to "*skip town, but don't I know it's the same all over around*". Taken from 'A Distant Fist Unclenching', their forthcoming follow-up to 2012's 'Leaves', this single has more scruffy charm than you can shake a leg at. Be sure to catch them on their upcoming UK tour.
Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

13. The Bohicas
To Die For

"*You've heard it all before but baby we're just to die for*", goes Dominic McGuinness (brother of mod-flavoured singer Eugene) with a swagger that's both cocky and tongue-in-cheek. He leads Essex quartet The Bohicas through a buzzing, hip-shaking slice of rock'n'roll that's so cool it could freeze the Equator. "*Resistance is just around the corner*", he sings. On this kind of form, the Domino signings will be getting none from us.
Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

14. Spoon
Satellite

It took Spoon four years to follow up 2010's 'Transference' with last year's new album, 'They Want My Soul'. Now we have 'Satellite', played at shows in the US at the end of last year. Details of its conception are scant, but it fits neatly into Spoon's repertoire of meticulously compiled slow-build mini-epics. Keyboardist Alex Fischel is front and centre, while singer Britt Daniel reassures that "*when you're feeling lonely I'm your satellite*".
Tom Howard, Assistant Editor

15. Yung
Nobody Cares

Yung Shord has been knocking around at Danish punk shows since he was 13. Now fronting Aarhus four-piece Yung, he's kicking and screaming into 2015 with 'Nobody Cares'. The first single from 'Alter', their debut EP due in March on Tough Love, it's a delicious introduction. Chiming in with a jangle, it screeches into a dirgey collision between grunge and punk. Iceage comparisons are inevitable, but Yung's brave racket is all their own.
Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

16. Lxury
Let Down

On new single 'Let Down', Andy Smith (aka Lxury) splices soulful vocal samples with old-school piano chords to make a brilliantly wonky dance tune. With his debut album imminent, the Croydon producer is showing off his way with layers of texture. 'Let Down"s galloping beat and floor-shaking bass will transport you to the best rave of your life. The perfect antidote to the January blues.
Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

17. Doldrums
Hotfoot

Will new album 'The Air Conditioned Nightmare' be the game-changer that helps Montreal musician Airick Woodhead be seen as more than Grimes' mate? This taster certainly suggests it might, with its clanging industrial beats, acid house flavour and loose 'Screamadelica' vibes. It's exciting, experimental stuff, but accessible too – and totally at odds with the grumpy implications of the name Woodhead works under.
Dan Stubbs, News Editor

18. The Go! Team
The Scene Between

"Catchiness is the hardest thing you can do," said Go! Team head honcho Ian Parton as he announced details of the fourth studio album from his bizarre brainchild. Come, come, Ian: with the goofy joy of the new album's title track 'The Scene Between' – with its scrappy, stuttering samples and syrupy melodies that are hotter than the sun – you're making it look a bloody doddle. This is like skidding down a rainbow.
Ben Hewitt, writer

19. Carl Barât And The Jackals
A Storm Is Coming

This is the second single from Basingstoke's finest and his boys ahead of the release of their debut album, 'Let It Reign', in February. Produced by Joby J Ford of The Bronx, 'A Storm Is Coming' begins with a guitar line not unlike the one that starts the Eagles' 'Hotel California'. Then, it drops into a garage-pop song lyrically referencing a weather lore proverb that dictates 40 days of storms ahead if it rains on St Swithin's Day.
Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

20. Ghostpoet
Off Peak Dreams

The first lines of 'Off Peak Dreams' see Obaro Ejimiwe rapping about "*cups of tea and bacon sarnies*". This first single from new album 'Shedding Skin' is as easygoing and comfortable as a breakfast in a greasy spoon. "*Look mate, I said I'm ready to roll*", he continues, as jazzy drums pop. Due on March 2 via PIAS, the album features folk singer Lucy Rose and Maximo Park's Paul Smith cosying up to Ghostpoet's easy rhymes.
Ben Homewood, Reviews Editor

The week

▶ EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

Pete Doherty at Karma Sound Studios, Bang Saray, Thailand, January 6, 2015

Fitter happier

A revitalised Pete Doherty looks to the future as The Libertines start recording in Thailand

Here's a welcome sight: the first photo of Pete Doherty since he emerged from rehab in Thailand, looking healthy, if a little pensive, as he contemplates the year ahead. Doherty left the rehabilitation facility in Chon Buri earlier this month and is now recording new material with his Libertines bandmates at the nearby Karma Sound Studios. The band's first album in over a decade will be born in this beachside idyll – a long way from the grotty London streets of old. "We always had the tunes but we threw so many away. Some sneaked out as internet giveaways or they weren't recorded properly," said Pete. "So this is a chance for us to make a record rather than somebody just stapling loads of bits together."

After their triumphant Hyde Park reunion shows last summer, the Libs signed a record deal with Virgin/EMI and, according to the co-frontman, now's the time for looking forward. Asked if the band can live up to their old material, Pete said: "I can't say that I've been able to listen properly to what we did, because some part of me doesn't want to engage with it. But whilst I've been clean I've tried to listen to some of it. If we can pick up from where we left off 10 years ago, fuck what anyone else thinks. We're still on a path to Arcadia. That's all that matters to me." ■ BEN HEWITT

PHOTO: KATIA DE VIDAS ADDITIONAL REPORTING: DYLAN KERR, LIAM THOMAS

Raft Records is a family business for Horrors man Faris Badwan and brother Tarik – and a home for their own brand-new band

Faris starts a label...

Faris and (right) Tarik Badwan

Horrors frontman Faris Badwan is known for many things: a glowering stage presence, hair that Noel Fielding would be proud of and a prickly attitude to the press. Now he's about to add another strand to his bow, as label boss of the newly launched Raft Records, which he's running with brother and Loom frontman Tarik. With it they're intending not only to give a leg-up to their slowly building roster, but also to release their own familial wares.

"I think it's quite easy for bands to lament the state of modern music, but there is always good stuff going on," enthuses Faris. "Now more than ever, people can record music with the means available to them. It's easy and it's accessible and you can start a label and *it's not that difficult*. We had this idea a few months ago and now our first record is pressed."

That first record is a split seven-inch dubbed the 'Raft Records EP', set for release in February and featuring four bands hand-picked by the brothers: female grunge trio Skinny Girl Diet, heavy psych quintet Niqab, alt-rock experimentalists Puffer and the mysterious Jet Black. "For the moment, the bands that appeal to us are the ones that do something quite live sounding and with a bit of rawness to the recording," says Faris. "I like labels that have real personality," adds Tarik. "Factory Records, Captured Tracks... labels that have a real lo-fi spirit to them."

As for the pair themselves, as well as releasing Loom's own LP this year, Raft will also see them putting out the first collaborative Badwan brothers efforts from their as-yet-unnamed new band. "The music we're writing isn't really like either of our bands; there are a lot of different ideas that are quite disparate," says Faris. Tarik references everything from "classic folk songs, like Leonard Cohen", to Nick Cave's old band The Birthday Party as an influence.

"It's hard to pin down what our band are about at the moment, but the thing we really prioritise is putting as much of our personality into the songs as possible," he says. "I'm most excited about seeing what we can do with harmonies – when brothers sing together, the tones of the voices naturally blend quite well. We're writing so much different stuff all the time, and in some ways this [label] solves the question about what to do with it. The seven-inch as a format is an outlet for ideas."

"I LIKE LABELS THAT HAVE REAL PERSONALITY" Tarik Badwan

So far, so harmonious. And what if there are any creative disputes at Raft HQ? "The good thing about working with your family is, if you have disagreements you can settle them by having a wrestling match – that seems to be the most direct way of doing things," nods Tarik. Ah, brotherly love... ■ LISA WRIGHT

THE 'RAFT RECORDS EP' LINE-UP

Skinny Girl Diet
▶TRACK Nadine Harley
▶NEED TO KNOW This London-based all-girl trio's riot grrrl-influenced grunge-punk has won enthusiastic backing from The Slits' Viv Albertine.
▶FOR FANS OF Babes In Toyland, Hole
▶HEAR THEM skinnygirldietband.tumblr.com
▶SEE THEM LIVE Shacklewell Arms, London (Jan 20)

Jet Black
▶TRACK Jet Black
▶NEED TO KNOW Like the inky void their name suggests, there's currently no information out there about this brand-new band – and so far the Badwan brothers aren't giving anything away.
▶FOR FANS OF mystery
▶HEAR THEM Listen to their track on the EP
▶SEE THEM LIVE No dates yet

Puffer
▶TRACK Life's A Cake
▶NEED TO KNOW London four-piece Puffer put out the 'Groth' EP last year – a dense, grungy affair that pitted nihilistic howls against prowling post-punk. Line-up buddies with Tarik's band Loom.
▶FOR FANS OF Nirvana, Loom
▶HEAR THEM puffer.bandcamp.com
▶SEE THEM LIVE No dates yet

Niqab
▶TRACK Part One
▶NEED TO KNOW London quintet Niqab, a "maximal psychedelic ensemble", also feature The Voyeurs' Danny Stead and deal in dense swathes of sound. Their track was originally a bedroom demo.
▶FOR FANS OF Toy, Bo Ningen
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/niqab
▶SEE THEM LIVE No dates yet

...and 1965 Records returns

The man who signed The Libertines revives his mid-noughties label

"I felt with so many bands reforming, it was time for a label to reform too." This, reckons James Endeacott, the A&R who famously discovered The Libertines, is reason enough to revive 1965 Records, the label he started in 2006 amid heaps of excitment and even an *NME* CD, 'Independent Thinking', showcasing signings such as retro rockers The Draytones.

Independently minded and eclectic, 1965 was home to artists as diverse as Scottish scoundrels The View and Sheffield DJ Toddla T in its heyday, but has fallen fallow in recent years as Endeacott focused on artist management for the likes of Coves, Eugene McGuinness and Edwyn Collins with his company Oh Mercy.

Endeacott and business partner Mat Schneck acknowledge that the landscape is different in 2015, but they hope to employ the same ethos as first time around: to let the music do the talking. "The industry is always changing and you just have to change with it or, if you're lucky, let it come round to your way of thinking," says Endeacott.

Although he's keeping his cards close to his chest about the bands he's signed, the industry veteran does let on that he's already snapped up Warrington quartet Man & The Echo. "What I really look for in a band are three things," Endeacott explains. "A beating heart, a beautiful melody... and good shoes."

As well as putting out records, Endeacott is planning on hosting regular club nights at London's Amersham Arms. The first one took place on December 20 and featured Man & The Echo plus two of Endeacott's favourite new bands, Holy and Lusts, as well as DJ sets from Palma Violets and Coves. "What I really want is for people to have the chance to see and hear some new music," he says. "And, ultimately, I want to unlock everyone's minds." ■ RHIAN DALY

MEET 1965 RECORDS' NEW SIGNING

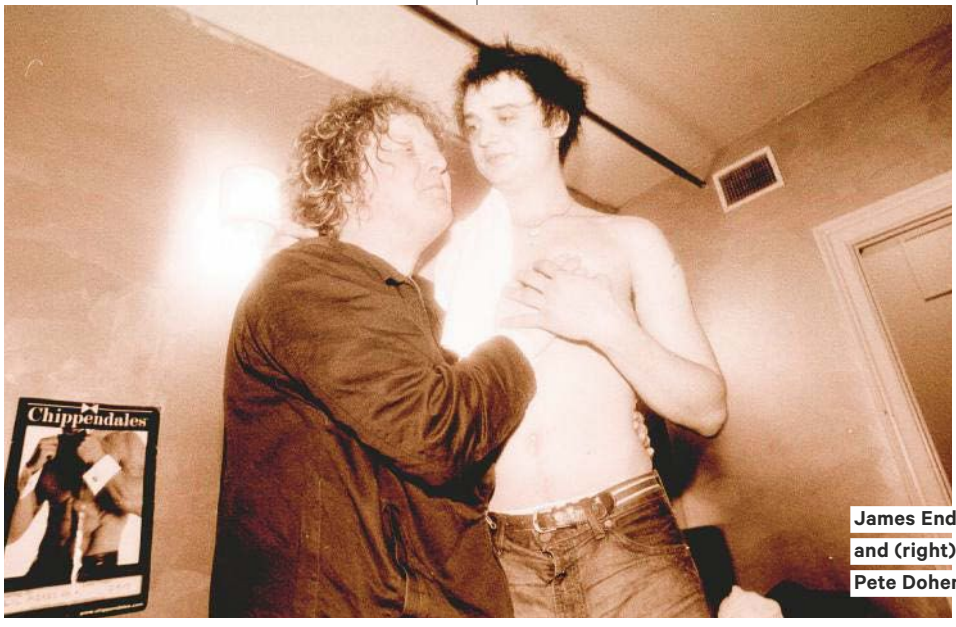
Man & The Echo

▶NEED TO KNOW The Warrington four-piece make back-to-basics indie that recalls the halcyon days of the pointy-shoed, skinny-jeaned mid-noughties. Debut single 'Beg' is a rousing anthem with spiky hooks.

▶FOR FANS OF The View, The Courteeners

▶HEAR THEM 'Beg' is available as a free download from mantheecho.bandcamp.com

"I WANT TO UNLOCK MINDS"
James Endeacott



James Endeacott and (right) Pete Doherty

ROGER SARGENT, REX

MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

Mike Lewis

No Devotion

BOOK
Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

"It's a novel set in 2044, at a time when everyone is plugged into a massive virtual reality utopia and obsessed with 1980s pop culture. It's full of geeky '80s references and nostalgia."

BOXSET
The Wire

"As Clay Davis would say, 'Sssshhhhhh-heeeeeeiiiiiiittttttt'! It's the greatest TV show of all time. Say no more."

FILM
Robocop

"This would be the original, of course. There are so many great one-liners and Clarence Boddicker is such a great villain. Watch the Paul Verhoeven cut for even more ridiculous ultraviolence."

GAME
Football Manager

"I once took Luton Town to Premier League champions during a two-week tour."

HOME COMFORT
Aeropress coffee maker

"I take a little kit with an AeroPress, hand grinder and a nice bag o' beans. It means you don't have to drink that muck made by the tax dodgers."

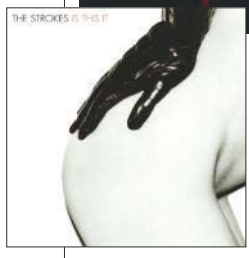
▶No Devotion kick off their UK tour, including three dates supporting Gerard Way, at The Fleece, Bristol on January 19

'Is This It' producer Gordon Raphael set to reveal all on forthcoming UK lecture tour

"Strokes stories? I have a backlog..."

You'll probably know Gordon Raphael as the owner of the face that didn't belong to one of The Strokes – but got equal billing with them – on the inner sleeve of their classic 2001 debut album 'Is This It'.

Gordon produced that album in his Manhattan basement studio, as well as the 2003 follow-up 'Room On Fire', capturing the band's skin-tight sound perfectly. He was replaced on studio duties for the band's third album 'First Impressions Of Earth' by Paul McCartney producer David Kahne, and has been living in Berlin since 2005.



Now he's set to head to the UK for a series of Q&A-style speaking shows. Happily, he's willing to accept that he'll be spending most of his time answering a lorry-load of questions about what it was like to be in the inner circle of Julian Casablancas' gang.

"Well, it just so happens that I have a backlog of stories about my time with those guys," he says.

Some of the yarns will be sweet and positive. "I remember walking around the East Village and seeing Albert Hammond Jr in his little suit with a box under his arm," Raphael recalls. "He was like, 'Hey Gordon, check out the artwork!' It was 'The Modern Age' EP, which I'd just produced for them. He was going up and down record stores on St Mark's Place asking if they'd take copies and put it out."

Some memories aren't quite so pleasant, such as the time Julian goaded him about not signing a proper deal to produce 'The Modern Age' after it made The Strokes the hottest new band in the world. "He came up to me – I could smell alcohol on him – and he hugged me," says Gordon. "Then he looked at me and said, 'Don't you wish like hell you'd made a contract with us? You're not getting anything from these records we're selling!' I said, 'You fucking asshole!'"

Gordon hasn't worked with a band as high-profile as The Strokes since, but he was inches away from producing The Libertines' debut. The band begged him to do it, but their label, Rough Trade, vetoed the move. "I was at a Strokes aftershow in London, very stoned," he says of his first meeting with Pete and Carl. "Pete, aged about 19 and wearing a trilby hat and old English suit, got on his knee, flipped his hat down his arm into his hand and sung me an old English song. It melted my heart!"

"I CALLED JULIAN CASABLANCAS A FUCKING ASSHOLE"
Gordon Raphael

His secret to giving captivating talks, beyond recalling intoxicated meetings with indie legends? Like his recording technique with The Strokes, it's simple but effective: "I wear a cool outfit, get onstage, then just ask people to ask questions!" ■ JAMIE FULLERTON

GORDON RAPHAEL'S TOUR DATES

Manchester Night & Day (January 29)
Wakefield Unity Works (30)
London Dingwalls (February 5)
Leeds Eiger Studios (8)

Alas, poor Yorick, I cannot swim...

Laura Marling shows her thespian side in new short film

Her forthcoming album (due on March 23) is called 'Short Movie', and now Laura Marling is the star of one, too: *Woman Driver*, which premieres at the London Short Film Festival on January 14.

Marling has already won Best Actress in the American 72-Hour National Film Challenge, for which the film was made. "We were given a genre, a character, a prop and a line of dialogue by the competition and wrote a storyline around that," director Chris Perkel says. "The film is about two strangers going in the same direction but for different reasons." ■ NADIA KHOMAMI

STAYING IN

THE BEST MUSIC ON TV, RADIO AND ONLINE THIS WEEK

Watch Green Day on Sky Arts, January 15

Green Day

Broadway Idiot

▶**WATCH** Sky Arts, January 15, 12.45am

Find out what it takes to transform a rock record into a Broadway musical as Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong gives the punk band's political opus 'American Idiot' a theatrical makeover. This documentary follows the process from conception to fruition.

Enter Shikari
X-Posure

▶**LISTEN** XFM, January 20, 10pm

The St Albans quartet return with their fourth album 'The Mindsweep' this week, and they'll talk to John Kennedy about the record and the political topics it tackles.

Anton Corbijn
Screen 6 Special

▶**LISTEN** BBC 6 Music, January 18, 1pm

The Dutch filmmaker and photographer chats to Edith Bowman about the use of music in his work. Corbijn has collaborated with the likes of Depeche Mode, Nick Cave and Nirvana in the past, and directed Ian Curtis biopic *Control*.

Shura
Launched At Red Bull Studios

▶**WATCH** Channel 4, January 14, 12.30am

Channel 4 offer up their own new music tips for 2015, and this week they shine a light on Moscow-born, London-based alt-pop singer Shura. Get to know her with this interview and performance.

Childhood
X-Posure

▶**LISTEN** XFM, January 19–20, 10pm

With 'Lacuna', the south London boys released one of the best debut albums of 2014, and this week they'll refresh your memory with some of its highlights. Tune in over two nights to hear them play the likes of 'As I Am' and 'Blue Velvet'.

Childhood

Bella Union
Mary Anne Hobbs

▶**LISTEN** BBC 6 Music, January 17, 7am

Simon Raymonde, head honcho of indie imprint Bella Union (home to The Flaming Lips, Money, The Walkmen), drops by 6 Music to talk about running a record label in the streaming era, and discusses the challenges bands face in the music industry in 2015.

GOING OUT

THE BEST LIVE EVENTS THIS WEEK

Helsinki

Babyshambles' Drew McConnell plays solo tracks.

▶**DATES** London Sebright Arms (January 14)

▶**TICKETS** £7 from wegottickets.com with 70p booking fee

Bugged Out Weekender

The Chemical Brothers, Mike Skinner, Todd Terje and more play the annual dance festival.

▶**DATES** Bognor Regis Butlins (January 16–18)

▶**TICKETS** £169–£209 from bigweekends.com

Nai Harvest

The Sheffield duo bring debut album 'Whatever' to Norwich.

▶**DATES** Norwich Owl Sanctuary (January 17)

▶**TICKETS** £5 from ueaticketbookings.co.uk with 50p booking fee

5 TO SEE FOR FREE

1. Death By Raygun
Shacklewell Arms, London
▶January 14, 8pm

2. Crushed Beaks
Rough Trade, Nottingham
▶January 15, 7pm

3. Theo Verney
The Old Blue Last, London
▶January 17, 8pm

4. Twin
Green Door Store, Brighton
▶January 20, 7.30pm

5. Oscar
The Old Blue Last, London
▶January 20, 8pm

COMPILED BY RHIAN DALY PHOTOS: PAMELA LITTKY, JENN FIVE

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FRI 27 FEB OXFORD O2 ACADEMY
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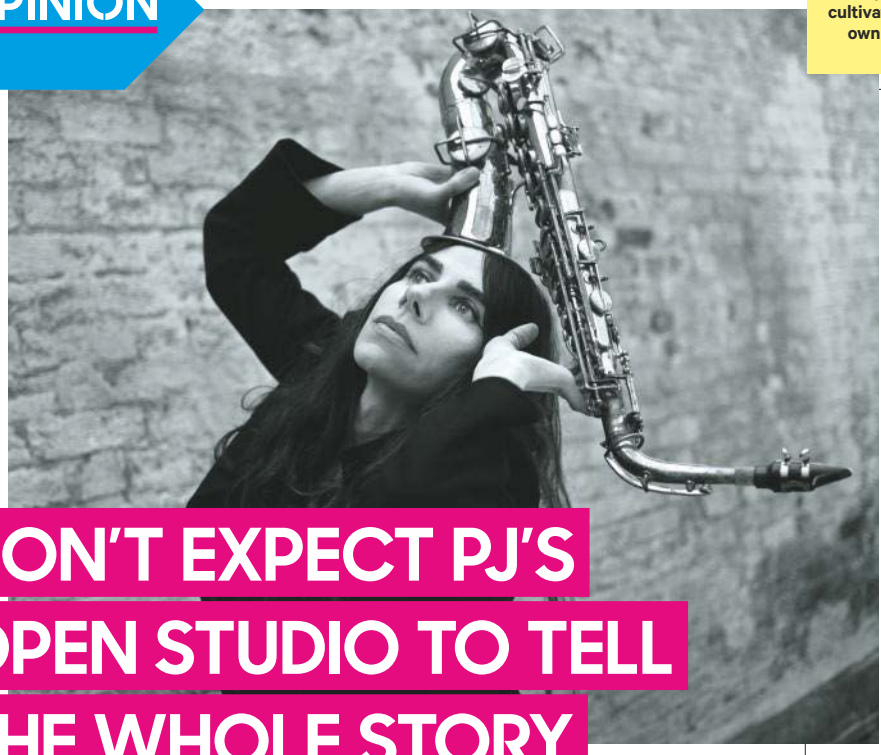


PJ Harvey and Nick Cave (right) have spent years cultivating their own myths

DON'T EXPECT PJ'S OPEN STUDIO TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY

BY **BEN HEWITT**

Polly Harvey is offering paying punters the chance to watch her recording her next album. But how much will they really see?

"Warts and all". That's what Artangel, PJ Harvey's collaborators on the public recording sessions for her ninth studio album, promise punters will see. You buy a ticket, you make your way to London's Somerset House, you gawp at Harvey and her band – trapped behind a glass window, like zoo animals – for 45 minutes, and then you shuffle out, the magic, mystery and myth of the creative process having duly been blown apart.

Breaking the magician's code is a risky business. It's great to learn how they really pull off those tricks, but it's disappointing when you discover the rabbit was in the hat all along. Artists are supposed to be unfathomable, and that goes double for Harvey, who's largely snubbed the oversharing clutches of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for a life in the shadows. She's flitted from persona to persona throughout her whole career, defying anyone who tries to fully pin her down. It's why she was able to be the punk priestess of 'Rid Of Me' and the war poet of 'Let England Shake' and be totally believable in each guise. Once upon a time, folk were terrified of PJ Harvey: after she released 'Down By The Water', some fans thought she genuinely was a baby-drowning maniac.

Pop along to Somerset House and you might just see how she pulls it all off, but you might pluck out some of her mystery, too. As St Vincent's Annie Clark asked last week, when discussing her love for David Bowie: "When did it become more authentic to just stand onstage with no lights or costume or theatricality and just stand up there with a beard and your feelings?"

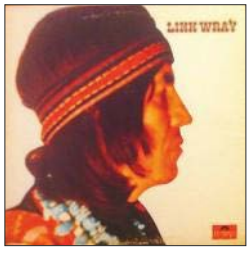
But then, I think you trust PJ Harvey at your peril. Guests are warned they might come away with no real insight at all; you'll turn up hoping to see the lesser-spotted Polly but you might have to settle for an engineer tinkering with sound levels. "There will be some visitors who experience longueurs, the tuning up of a bass guitar," admitted Artangel co-director Michael Morris.

There's also a question over how much these album sessions will resemble regular recording sessions – which, as most music journalists can tell you, tend to be as pacy as your average cricket match. The venue, for a start, is not a regular studio: it's an old rifle range within the splendour of one of London's most beautiful buildings. Artangel have revealed they've been talking about this project with Harvey for at least a year. How many songs and ideas has she dreamt up in that time? How much preparation has she done? How much scripting?

Harvey's way too canny to be caught doing anything she doesn't want you to see. Like her old collaborator Nick Cave, she's spent 20-odd years cultivating myths. People thought last year's excellent Cave documentary, *20,000 Days On Earth*, would reveal his secrets, but instead it added further layers of fug and smoke to the mystery. This might just be Harvey's way of doing the same thing: an elaborate piece of performance art masquerading as an exposé. She's dangling the prospect of unprecedented access but stage-managing the whole affair. Sure, the window you'll spy on her through might be transparent, but Harvey's bigger picture? That's still opaque. ■

▶For more opinion and debate, head to NME.COM/blogs

LOST ALBUMS #59



Link Wray

Link Wray (1971)

Chosen by Dan Auerbach, The Black Keys

"Link Wray [the American rock'n'roll guitarist best known for his 1958 hit 'Rumble'] recorded this with his brother in a little converted chicken shack on his farm in Maryland. The cover is him in side-profile with a headband – his mother was a Shawnee Native American. I love everything about it – the way it sounds, how funky it is. It's a cool record. His voice is amazing: fragile, broken and soulful. A lot of albums I buy nowadays, there's only one or two songs that I really like, but I can listen to this whole and it sets a mood. It's the complete package."

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** June 1971
▶**LABEL** Polydor
▶**BEST TRACKS** Juke Box Mama, Ice People
▶**WHERE TO FIND IT** Second-hand record shops
▶**LISTEN ONLINE** Spotify

AS TOLD TO GARY RYAN PHOTOS: ARTANGEL/SEAMUS MURPHY, SAM JONES

Recording in The Grove Studios, New South Wales

Courtney Barnett

Overcoming the creative block that followed 'The Double EP...', the Australian singer penned a set of songs with "life-y themes"

A dead seal and a depressing trip to the seaside: that's all it took for Courtney Barnett to banish the creative funk she'd mired herself in while writing her debut album proper. "My problem is I think a lot about things and it just fuckin' depresses me," says the stress-prone Melbourne songwriter, who had "trouble breathing in" on her breakout hit, 'Avant Gardener'. "I had a bunch of songs I was trying to finish, and I was just having the worst time. So I took my friend's caravan down the coast and had this terrible weekend of looking at the world. I saw a dead seal while I was out walking on the beach, and that became part of this overwhelming feeling I sometimes get when I consider all the problems with the world."

Barnett took the incident as her cue to write a six-minute, environmentally themed epic, 'Kim's Caravan', that would provide her with the breakthrough she'd been looking for. It seems like an odd choice of subject matter for the brains behind the rambling, deadpan, casually incisive songs on 'The Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas', but clearly the environment is an issue that's close to her heart. "I did a climate change march a few weeks back in Melbourne," she shrugs when pressed (Barnett doesn't give much away unless pressed). Though a natural pessimist, she nonetheless feels compelled to be a good citizen. "I do as much as I can. I kind of feel like the only way any change can really happen is if people actually do something."

> **"I WAS STRESSING OUT BECAUSE I HADN'T FINISHED SOME OF THE SONGS, BUT I THINK I DID IT ON PURPOSE"**
> **COURTNEY BARNETT**

The outside world makes its presence felt on another new track, 'Dead Fox', which touches on issues of consumer choice ("*A friend told me that they stick nicotine in apples*"), and on guns-blazing rocker 'Pedestrian At Best', which cleverly flips off the hype surrounding her music: "*Put me on a pedestal, I'll only disappoint you/Tell me I'm exceptional, I promise to exploit you*".

Barnett denies that the new songs are more outward-facing or political than the earlier ones, but says she did notice a common thread of "darker songs to do with death, getting older and life-y kind of themes" when putting the album together. It was cut in the spring between long bouts of touring – the first time Barnett had set foot outside her native Australia. "I was stressing out because I hadn't finished some of the songs," she says. "But I actually think I did it on purpose, subconsciously. That way there's no attachment or thought process guiding you; you get the idea in its rawest form. I find that the energy of that instant opens up something else."

"Someone told me recently that people have 99 per cent the same thoughts every day," she adds of her first-take-best-take approach. "When you pick up a guitar, it's very easy to write the same song over and over. You have to push yourself to think differently and access different parts of your brain." Happily, Courtney's got more brains than most under that scruffy barnet of hers. Just be glad she's racking them on our behalf.

■ ALEX DENNEY

▶THE DETAILS

▶**TITLE** Sometimes I Sit And Think, Sometimes I Just Sit
▶**RELEASE DATE** March 2015
▶**LABEL** Marathon Artists
▶**PRODUCERS** Burke Reid, Dan Luscombe and Courtney Barnett
▶**RECORDED** The Grove Studios, New South Wales
▶**TRACKS INCLUDE** Pedestrian At Best, Kim's Caravan, Dead Fox
▶**COURTNEY BARNETT SAYS** "I'm proud of this album. On the first EP I was mucking around a lot. On the next one I flipped it around to see how easy it was to write a song with a chorus that was still interesting. This one's more like both."

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SPA

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BIRMINGHAM
O2 ACADEMY

FRIDAY 08 MAY
CARDIFF
MOTORPOINT ARENA

SATURDAY 09 MAY
BLACKPOOL
EMPRESS BALLROOM

MONDAY 11 MAY
READING
RIVERMEAD

TUESDAY 12 MAY
BRIGHTON CENTRE

THURSDAY 14 MAY
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THE NEW ALBUM 'THE DAY IS MY ENEMY' OUT 30 MARCH

ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM

"WE HATED THE WORLD. AND EACH OTHER"
Shawn 'Clown' Crahan

THIS WEEK...

Slipknot: Iowa

Touring the UK this week, the horror-masked group made one of the biggest-selling records of the nu-metal era with their second album

THE BACKGROUND

In retrospect, Slipknot's second album proper could have been a disaster. Having just finished the extensive tour for 1999's self-titled major-label debut, the group decided to head straight into the studio. "That's where we got into war," drummer Joey Jordison said later, blaming exhaustion and various drug and alcohol dependency issues within the band. Producer Ross Robinson was suffering, too, after fracturing his back in a motorbike accident. He's now credited with focusing his pain, along with the band's, into their heaviest album. Fans at the time imagined Slipknot would use the platform of their newfound fame to release a set of radio-friendly songs. Instead, 'Iowa' came across as a premonition of the darkness that lay ahead – just two weeks after its release, 9/11 happened.

◀ STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

For an album that contains the lyric "*If you're 555, then I'm 666*" in lead single 'The Heretic Anthem', it wasn't much of a surprise to find the group's in-house visual artist, Shawn 'Clown' Crahan, messing with anti-Christian imagery on the sleeve. Throughout history, the goat has been used to symbolise the devil in different ways and it's also a sacrificial animal in some religions.

FIVE FACTS

1 The album is named after Slipknot's home state, an area of the 'American Heartland' not exactly known for its musicians, although big band legend Glenn Miller was born there back in 1904.

2 There's another nod to Iowa in the title of the opening track '(515)' – the telephone area code of the central part of the state.

3 The grandfather of Sid Wilson, the group's DJ, died while the album was in the process of being recorded. The screams on '(515)' are thought be Wilson expressing his pain about the news the following day.

4 'Iowa' marks the moment that guitarist Jim Root became an integral part of the Slipknot recording band. He only played on two songs on their debut, although he toured the album with the group.

5 Famously, Corey Taylor recorded the 15-minute title track – the closing track on the album – naked, puking on himself and slashing himself with broken glass as he did. He may also have been high.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I wanna slit your throat and fuck the wound" – 'Disasterpiece'

This became the album's most controversial lyric after it was cited in a 2003 murder case. It was claimed that the killers, both convicted, sang the line as they committed their crime.

"I'm in conniptions for the final act you came here for" – 'My Plague'

The first line of the final single from the album. 'Conniptions' are fits of rage or hysterics – a good word to sum up 'Iowa' as a whole.

"They all lost their dad, or their wife just died/They never got to go outside, shut up/Nobody gives a fuck" – 'I Am Hated'

A brutal, and very funny, attack on those who blame their problems on everyone but themselves.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"People might well equal shit, but sometimes they care enough to make records this exhilarating, this brutal, this good. It could almost restore your faith in humanity." 8/10
Victoria Segal

WHAT WE SAY NOW

They never considered themselves to be nu-metal, but if that term describes a period of time as much as a genre, 'Iowa' is the nu-metal album that best stands the test of time. It still sounds disturbed and thunderous.

FAMOUS FAN

"I see a lot of Slipknot T-shirts at our concerts, and I've seen a lot of Marilyn Manson T-shirts at Slipknot concerts. I think it's because we're two of only a few bands that have genuine attitude in what we do. Angst and heavy music has become such a trend, but young music fans in particular are able to see through fake ones, and they know which ones are for real." **Marilyn Manson**, 2001

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"When we did 'Iowa', we hated each other. We hated the world; the world hated us." **Shawn 'Clown' Crahan, 2008**

THE AFTERMATH

'Iowa' reached Number One in the UK album chart and Number Three in the US. Over time, the album has grown in stature. In 2011, 10 years after its release, it was reissued as a special edition with a bonus live CD and a DVD featuring the Slipknot film from that era, *Disasterpieces*. Against the odds, the band are still going strong: last year's '.5: The Gray Chapter', their fifth album (but their first without founding member Paul Gray and long-standing drummer Joey Jordison), was a US chart-topper.

▶THE DETAILS

▶RECORDED October 2000, January–February 2001 **▶RELEASE DATE** August 28, 2001 **▶LENGTH** 66:19 **▶PRODUCERS** Slipknot, Ross Robinson **▶STUDIO** Sound City and Sound Image, Los Angeles **▶HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 **▶SINGLES** The Heretic Anthem, Left Behind, My Plague **▶TRACKLISTING** ▶1. (515) ▶2. People = Shit ▶3. Disasterpiece ▶4. My Plague ▶5. Everything Ends ▶6. The Heretic Anthem ▶7. Gently ▶8. Left Behind ▶9. The Shape ▶10. I Am Hated ▶11. Skin Ticket ▶12. New Abortion ▶13. Metabolic ▶14. Iowa

WORDS: PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE PHOTO: CORBIS

NEWS DESK

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I get a wage of £60,000, but I pay more than that to my cowman"

Michael Eavis explains why he's always wearing the same shorts while answering questions about Glastonbury's £32 million profits

THE NUMBERS

500

Total number of weeks that Status Quo have now spent in the Official UK Album Charts – although they're still some way behind Queen's 1,457 weeks

£13,200,000

What BitTorrent estimates Thom Yorke might have made from legal downloads of his 'Tomorrow's Modern Boxes' album

1

Number of renowned spiritual gurus rumoured to be playing Glastonbury this year: Buddhist hero the Dalai Lama is being tipped for a slot at Worthy Farm

£13,800

Amount that one lucky bidder paid for a pair of Mac DeMarco's "old, stinky shoes" on eBay

WHO THE FUCK IS...

Sean Read

The keyboardist for the Manics, Dexy's and Edwyn Collins got stuck – along with 38 others – in Mumbai Airport after missing a flight. A 36-hour Twitter rant ensued.

What did he write?

He directed his ire at the airline when he was told he'd have to wait up to eight days for a flight. "Small children, a wheelchair user and a breast cancer patient #strandedinmumbai," he grumbled.

And did he get home?

Yes, eventually – and he was surprised to find he'd become a celebrity when he did. "Blimey, it's worldwide now," he tweeted.

+ GOOD WEEK +

Anaïs Gallagher

Last year, Noel was on the sofa watching telly with Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell. Now he's set to have a supermodel in his house, too. Daughter Anaïs, 14, has landed her first modelling job as the face of high street brand Accessorize.

– BAD WEEK –

Patrick Carney

The snarky Black Keys drummer was enjoying a holiday on the swank island of St Barts when he came a cropper in the sea: a giant wave slammed him into the ocean floor and dislocated his shoulder. Make sure it doesn't turn blue, Patrick.

IN BRIEF

Queen of the store rage

Brody Dalle has hit out at US store Macy's, accusing them of stealing her image for their Fashion Rocks range. "Your next campaign should be called STEALING ROCKS," she sniped. Macy's are yet to respond.

Anacondon't

A man has been banned from drinking alcohol after ringing emergency services and claiming he was Nicki Minaj. Steven Brown, from Crumlin, Co Antrim, rang 999 several times on Christmas Day, also insisting that he had a poltergeist in his house.

Auntie Boob

BBC's *The One Show* issued an apology when pop star Rita Ora's cleavage prompted 400 complaints. "We would have requested she wore something more suitable for 7pm," they said.

▶Find these stories and more on NME.COM

Official Record Store Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS JANUARY 11, 2015

NEW 01

Sam Smith
In The Lonely Hour CAPITOL

The British soul singer's success continues into 2015, and his debut album reclaims the top spot in the Official Record Store Chart.

▲	2	Wanted On Voyage **George Ezra** COLUMBIA
▼	3	Lost In The Dream **The War On Drugs** SECRETLY CANADIAN
▲	4	The Endless River **Pink Floyd** RHINO
▲	5	1989 **Taylor Swift** EMI
▼	6	X **Ed Sheeran** ASYLUM
▼	7	A Perfect Contradiction **Paloma Faith** RCA
▲	8	Sonic Highways **Foo Fighters** RCA
NEW	9	Ghost Culture **Ghost Culture** BECAUSE MUSIC
▲	10	Hozier **Hozier** ISLAND
■	11	Our Love **Caribou** CITY SLANG
▼	12	Royal Blood **Royal Blood** WARNER BROS
▼	13	Rock Or Bust **AC/DC** COLUMBIA
▼	14	No Sound Without Silence **The Script** COLUMBIA
▼	15	Never Been Better **Olly Murs** EPIC
▼	16	AM **Arctic Monkeys** DOMINO
▼	17	Chapter One **Ella Henderson** SYCO MUSIC
▲	18	Motion **Calvin Harris** COLUMBIA
▼	19	Four **One Direction** SYCO MUSIC
■	20	Mechanical Bull **Kings Of Leon** RCA
▼	21	Stay Gold **First Aid Kit** COLUMBIA
▼	22	III **Take That** POLYDOR
▲	23	(What's The Story) Morning Glory? **Oasis** BIG BROTHER
▲	24	Love In The Future **John Legend** COLUMBIA
▼	25	Sun Structures **Temples** HEAVENLY
NEW	26	St Vincent **St Vincent** CAROLINE/LOMA VISTA
▲	27	Partners **Barbra Streisand** COLUMBIA
▼	28	Very Best Of **Joe Jackson** UMTV
NEW	29	Forever **Queen** VIRGIN
▲	30	The Dark Side Of The Moon **Pink Floyd** RHINO
▼	31	The Balcony **Catfish & The Bottlemen** COMMUNION
▲	32	Nothing Has Changed – The Very Best Of **David Bowie** RCA/RHINO
▼	33	I Forget Where We Were **Ben Howard** ISLAND
▼	34	48:13 **Kasabian** COLUMBIA
■	35	Blue Smoke – The Best Of **Dolly Parton** MASTERWORKS
NEW	36	Nevermind **Nirvana** GEFFEN
NEW	37	The Very Best Of **10cc** MERCURY/UMTV
▼	38	This Is All Yours **Alt-J** INFECTIOUS MUSIC
NEW	39	The Silver Globe **Jane Weaver** BIRD
NEW	40	Syro **Aphex Twin** WARP

The Official Charts Company compiles the Official Record Store Chart from sales through 100 of the UK's best independent record shops from Sunday to Sunday.

TOP OF THE SHOPS

THIS WEEK

CODA
EDINBURGH

FOUNDED 1996

WHY IT'S GREAT Originally opened as a folk music shop, Coda now serves all genres but keeps its first love close to its core.

TOP SELLER LAST WEEK Pink Floyd – 'The Endless River'

THEY SAY "Slip through to The Vinyl Room, opened in 2012, at the back for all the shiny, new vinyl."

NEWDESK COMPILED BY BEN HEWITT PHOTOS: GETTY, POONEH GHANA, EMINEM CREW/TWITTER

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE

Sting

The Beatles

Billy Corgan

Smashing Pumpkins

THE FIRST SONG I CAN REMEMBER HEARING
'I Just Want To Celebrate' – Rare Earth
"Rare Earth were the white band on Motown. This song was a big hit in America – it was a little bit like The Temptations' 'Ball Of Confusion'."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH
'Little Child' – The Beatles
"I was a little child and there I was listening to 'Little Child'. I thought that they were singing to me – I didn't know they were big stars, those Beatles. I once begged Cheap Trick to cover 'Little Child', and Rick [Nielson, Cheap Trick guitarist] just kinda shook his head."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT
'Meet The Beatles!' – The Beatles
"I bought it at a street sale for 25 cents. That was my introduction to the world of The Beatles. I had no idea who they were, I just saw this record and bought it. We didn't know in America, probably until the '80s, that we got totally jobbed on The Beatles' albums ['Meet The Beatles!' was cobbled together for the US market in 1964]. We felt kind of offended."

"LISTENING TO THE RAMONES OPENS THE MAGIC DOORWAY TO ROCK'N'ROLL"

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO START A BAND
'I Wanna Be Sedated' – Ramones
"You listen to a song like that and think, 'I could do that.' And that's the beauty of something like the Ramones – you think, 'If they can do that, I can do that,' and it opens the magic doorway to rock'n'roll."

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO
Anything by The Police
"For a long time in the Pumpkins we had a 'no Police' rule. You couldn't listen to The Police. I don't know why – I like Sting quite a lot now, but at the time we'd switch the radio off if The Police came on. D'arcy [Wretzky, bassist] particularly liked The Police, and she'd always complain and say, 'I don't understand why we can't listen to The Police', and I was like, 'It's a rule.' It's one of those decrees you make that you never have to explain."

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE
'Nowhere Man' – The Beatles
"It suits my voice and I feel I can do an adequate job. One time in Japan we went to karaoke with a bunch of fans and they actually had the bad synthesizer version of my song 'Zero'. So, me being a post-ironic artist, I thought I'd get up and do it, but I did it at full volume as if I was singing it in concert, and the look of horror on our fans' faces I'll never forget. It set US-Japanese relations back 50 years."

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE
Doesn't exist
"There is no song on Earth that makes me want to dance. Was there ever a song called 'Rhythm Is Not A Dancer'?"

THE SONG I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD
John Lennon – 'Give Peace A Chance'
"Anything on the radio that haunts me is worth getting out of my head. I've developed strategies for how to kill those songs you can't get out of your head and discovered there are two songs that will kill any other song you have stuck in your head, guaranteed: Disney's 'It's A Small World' and 'Give Peace A Chance'.

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN
'Breaking The Law' – Judas Priest
"It's so simple, so fantastic, utterly classic. It'll never get old."

THE SONG THAT REMINDS ME OF GRUNGE
None
"I said it at the time and I still maintain it: although it was a great era for music in general, it didn't produce the number of great songs that it should have. For a lot of the bands it was more about the sound that they had, the feel they had or the concerts they played. Unfortunately there's a vast shortage of grunge classics."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL
'The Art Of Fugue' – Johann Sebastian Bach
"I'm living that funeral all the time, so there's no difference whether you play it now or later. This is often described as the last piece that Bach wrote, which apparently isn't true according to Wikipedia, which we all know is the source of all truth."

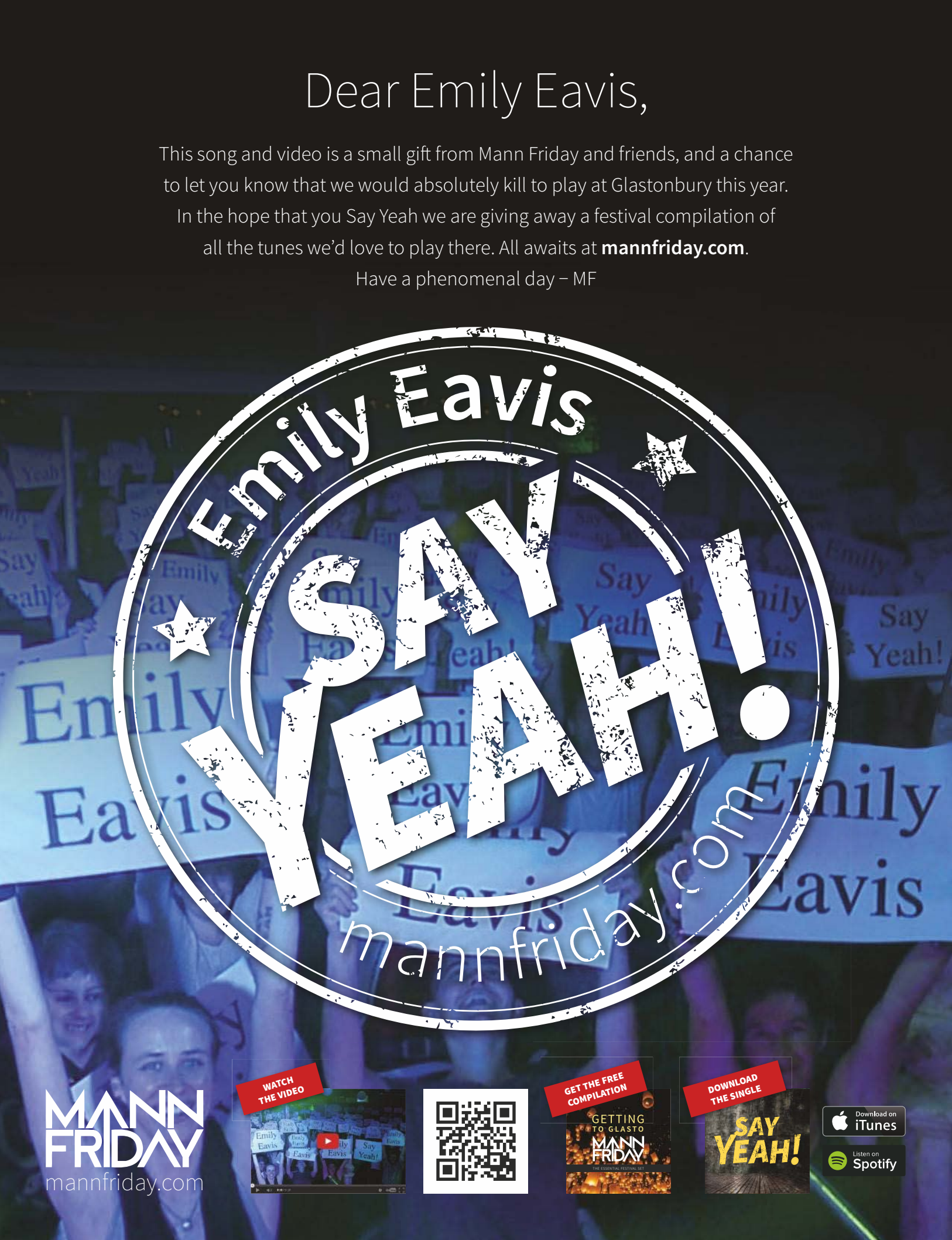
Rob Halford of Judas Priest

AS TOLD TO MARK BEAUMONT PHOTO: CORBIS

Dear Emily Eavis,

This song and video is a small gift from Mann Friday and friends, and a chance to let you know that we would absolutely kill to play at Glastonbury this year. In the hope that you Say Yeah we are giving away a festival compilation of all the tunes we'd love to play there. All awaits at **mannfriday.com**.

Have a phenomenal day – MF



Radar

▶YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST ■ EDITED BY MATT WILKINSON

▶LISTEN NOW
NME.COM/
NEWMUSIC

NME NEW BAND OF THE WEEK

Curtis Harding

Multi-talented Black Lips collaborator unveils his new "slop'n'soul" direction

"I don't really give a fuck about a whole lot of shit," Curtis Harding says in his deep baritone, while travelling down the motorway at the tail end of his first British tour. Hailing from the same Atlanta scene that birthed friends and collaborators Black Lips, you can immediately detect the languid distaste for authority that unites the two, but Harding is no slacker.

He has immersed himself in the Atlanta underground for years now, making friends and playing with Night Sun – the side project of Lips man Cole Alexander – among others. It's his solo project that illuminates him best, though, with debut album 'Soul Power' drawing on his gospel roots and bringing things right up to date with buzzsaw guitars and riffs galore. For proof, listen to album track 'I Don't Wanna Go Home' – co-written with Lips singer Jared Swilley – which also featured on the band's 'Underneath The Rainbow' LP last year. "My version is better. Write that down," he jokes. "We like the same kind of shit, we go to the same bars, we open up at each other's shows. When someone turns you on to a genre, you take that style and turn it into your own shit." His own shit, currently, is what he describes as "slop'n'soul", elaborating that "it can be dirty, messy, funky, and of course there's a soul element because that's what I grew up listening to".

▼
ON NME.COM/NEWMUSIC NOW
▶Stream 'Soul Power' in full

But Harding's horizons aren't limited to North American basement venues. He's already been scooped up by fashion guru Hedi Slimane – who gave 'Soul Power' its title and shot the seductive cover art – and recently supported Jack White on tour across the US.

And he's brimming with ideas. "I'm demoing for the second album already. And I wanna do a country record; a dreampop album with a girl singing; I love writing with [Black Lips] still... It's good to have different styles in your repertoire. If you can only do one thing, then people don't really need you that much; but if you do multiple things, then you're needed a lot." Sounds like he might secretly give a fuck after all. ■ LISA WRIGHT

▶THE DETAILS

▶**BASED** Atlanta, Georgia
▶**FOR FANS OF** Otis Redding, Black Lips
▶**SOCIAL** twitter.com/kirk_underwater
▶**BUY IT NOW** 'Soul Power' is released in the UK on January 19
▶**SEE HIM LIVE** London Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, March 11
▶**BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Harding had no idea who fashion photographer Hedi Slimane was until he turned up to an LA show and asked to shoot it. "I didn't know who the fuck he was then, but his design style is really good," he says now

ANDREAS TERLAAK

MORE NEW MUSIC

The Pearl Harts

Matagot

Upholding London college Goldsmiths' reputation as a hub of creativity, Matagot's 'Britney' is a storming example of contemporary riot grrrl. The group formed last summer and have already amassed a small handful of strong demos, including 'Lidless' and 'Teeth'. There's a strong feminist influence running through their work. Citing Julianna Hatfield and Liz Phair as influences, they write lyrics about "girls, bodies, and things that make us angry".

▶SOCIAL facebook.com/gotmatagot

▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/matagot

NME BUZZ BAND OF THE WEEK

Yung

This riveting Danish act fuse the gothic sensibilities of Iceage with guttural, Cobain-style screaming. After playing a smattering of shows around Copenhagen, they're just about poking their heads over the parapet. UK shows are mooted for February, while key track 'Nobody Cares' is doing big business online. It's the perfect song to kick off 2015.

▶SOCIAL yungbandstuff.com

▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/tough-love

Flesh

If Weezer were "str8 outta Manc" and went on Club 18-30 holidays to the Mediterranean, they may well have ended up sounding like Flesh. The "sleaze snotpop" outfit are piles of fun, with snarled Britpop anthems galore and a hilariously overstated look that can only be compared to Goldie Lookin Chain. The video for 'Avin' It In Ibiza' says it all – Kappa tracksuits, Strongbow and an old-style Seat Ibiza unite for four minutes of madness.

▶SOCIAL facebook.com/luvflesh

▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/luvflesh

JENN FIVE

Ocean Floor

Ocean Floor is "a 22-year-old guy making music in a cramped bedroom. With shitty equipment." That's according to Harley Cooper, the Melbourne solo artist behind the moniker – but debut track 'Nova' suggests he's much more than that modest description would imply. His delicate acoustic guitars and washy vocals are more in line with Bright Eyes or Elliott Smith.

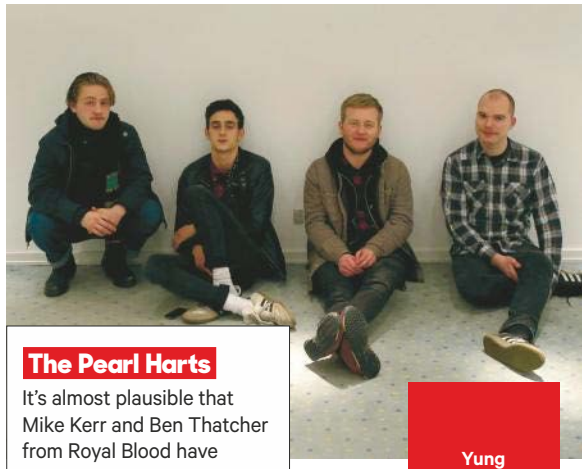
▶HEAR HIM soundcloud.com/ocean_floor

Supercrush

Songwriter Mark Palm's musical heritage lies in punk and hardcore acts, but his latest project Supercrush embodies the alt-pop of the '90s with aplomb. Based in Vancouver and completed by drummer Aaron O'Neil, the duo's single 'I Don't Want To Be Sad Anymore' is a fuzzed-out anthem that recalls Teenage Fanclub and Swervedriver. Sun-soaked riffs and saccharine vocals combine for uplifting and nostalgic results.

▶SOCIAL facebook.com/supercrushmusic

▶HEAR THEM supercrush.bandcamp.com



Yung

The Pearl Harts

It's almost plausible that Mike Kerr and Ben Thatcher from Royal Blood have morphed into a female duo called Kirsty and Sara to release music as The Pearl Harts. These two girls have a serious ear for dynamic riffs and gigantic tunes. Taking Britain's biggest power duo as a springboard, their track 'Black Blood' adds some call-and-response blues to a metallic Rage Against The Machine-style funk riff.

▶SOCIAL facebook.com/thepearlharts

▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/the-pearl-harts

Limited

Alex Craig is a member of Brooklyn band Big Troubles, but Limited is his gloomy synthpop side project. The two tracks he has put up on SoundCloud recently meld haunted vocal refrains with a steel-edged sonic palette reminiscent of Nine Inch Nails or Portishead's 'Third'. 'Times Square Poet' is his best song so far, a jackhammer beat hashing out a big melodic chorus. Real Estate's Matt Mondanile just signed Craig to his New Images label.

▶SOCIAL @limitedvevo

▶HEAR HIM soundcloud.com/limitedmusic1

Pale Blue

Mike Simonetti is perhaps best known as one of the founders of Italians Do It Better, the label responsible for acts like Glass Candy, Chromatics and Desire. Having recently left that ↪

BAND CRUSH

Cleo Tucker

Girlpool

Radiator Hospital

"I feel super emotionally connected to Radiator Hospital for many reasons. I think there's an aspect of honesty and truth in what Sam [Cook-Parrott, singer] writes and I think he really knows how to channel that part of him through his music and get there every time."

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post, Simonetti's new focus is on Pale Blue, a collaboration with vocalist Elizabeth Wight. Ethereal debut track 'The Past We Leave Behind' recalls the divine, dusky aura of the *Drive* OST, with its dreamy synthesizers and a minimal house beat.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/paleblueofficial
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/capturedtracks

Sievehead

Fans of Eagulls' agitated punk and hardcore will want to check out fellow Yorkshiremen Sievehead. The Sheffield band's first demo is available now on Bandcamp, and is an aggressive assault packed full of pissed-off anthems and fed-up blasts of fury; think Wipers, No Age or Iceage before they discovered Nick Cave.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/sieveheadband
▶HEAR THEM sievehead.bandcamp.com

Dissolve

Comparisons to My Bloody Valentine are inevitable, but this San Francisco duo's debut EP 'S/T' is every bit as intoxicating as the works of their shoegazing forefathers. Meticulous production submerges Inna Kurikova's murmured vocals beneath layers of gorgeously swirling guitars in 'Where We Are', and 'Statement' peaks with a solo that sounds like it was recorded in a whirlpool.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/dissolvemusic
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/dissolve-sf

Aurora

Fascinator

'Lord Fascinator', as he is sometimes known, is a New Yorker with a penchant for heady, symphonic psych-pop in the mould of Sébastien Tellier. String medleys and sexy basslines are cornerstones of his surrealist sound, as are eccentric lyrics about "*leprechauns*" and "*tiny little ginger bits*".
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/lordfascinator
▶HEAR HIM fascinatormusic.bandcamp.com

Anti Pony

For some bands, psychedelia is just a flavour of the month. For Stockholm's Anti Pony, though, it's an ever-whirring kaleidoscope of sonic potential. Alexander Pierre and Sanna Colling are the duo responsible for creating debut single 'Cry On The Floor'. It's a beast of a pop number, sounding like the primal garage of The 13th Floor Elevators stomping all over Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood's creations.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/antiponymusic
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/pnkslm

Dissolve

Mura Masa

Brighton's Alex Crossan, aka Mura Masa, has slowly but surely built up a huge audience for his soulful electronica since starting out two years ago as a 16-year-old. Since then he has crafted a unique take on the globetrotting sounds of Bonobo and Gold Panda, mixing hip-hop beats with stirring string samples. This refusal to sit still has drawn plaudits from Sohn, Diplo and Skrillex, and his brilliant debut album 'Soundtrack To A Death' is out now.
▶SOCIAL @mura_masa_
▶HEAR HIM soundcloud.com/jakarta-records
▶SEE HIM LIVE January 15 at Green Door Store, Brighton

Aurora

Eighteen-year-old Norwegian Aurora Aksnes' atmospheric electronic pop certainly has the strength to back up the hype around her. 'Awakening' was the first track to turn heads, with delicate pianos and sparse beats backing her pixie-like voice. 'Under Stars' is a more recent but equally enticing cut, full of swelling synths and rumbling drums.

Radar NEWS ROUND UP

TRAVIS GETS ROMANTIC

Lo-fi artist Travis Bretzer releases his debut album 'Waxing Romantic' on February 23 via Mexican Summer. The psych-pop LP features contributions from MGMT's James Richardson and members of Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, with the latter's Jorge Elbrecht also on production duties.

NEW ERA FOR ECHO LAKE

Echo Lake are back with their second album, 'Era'. The follow-up to 2012's debut 'Wild Peace' is released on March 2 via No Pain In Pop. Recorded at Holy Mountain Studio in east London, the seven-track, 45-minute record features an epic 10-minute closer, 'Heavy Dreaming'.

Echo Lake

Slaughter Beach

SLAUGHTER BEACH RETURN

After bursting onto the scene last year with their debut song 'Spinning Globe', Danish indie trio Slaughter Beach are back with brand new track called 'Nuked'. Sounding not too dissimilar to MGMT's most popular material, the track is a hugely promising start to 2015 for them.

BLACK TAMBOS HIT THE ROAD

Cornwall's Black Tambourines have announced a bunch of shows with Manchester's Pins this February, calling at venues in Brighton, London and Salford. The band also play Southampton with fellow up'n'comers Yak on February 28, before headlining some of their own dates in March.

WORDS: MATT WILKINSON, JAMES BENTLEY, TIM HAKKI, DAVID RENSHAW
PHOTOS: CHE HISE-GATTONE, SAMMY NIEDEL, JUAN ORTIZ, MIKAEL GREGORSKY, DAVID WALDMAN

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Anti Pony

▶SOCIAL facebook.com/aurora.aksnes
▶HEAR HER soundcloud.com/auroraaksnes

The Thons

After touring with Parquet Courts and self-releasing three albums last year, you'd think The Thons would be a bigger prospect. Let's hope 2015 is more propitious for them as they release fourth album 'Hot Fun'. If 'Lose Control' and 'Looking Out, Looking In' are anything to go by, their melodic post-punk should land them more high-profile touring buddies.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/thethons
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/the-thons

Radar LABEL OF THE WEEK

Katorga Works

▶FOUNDED 2010 by Adam Whites
▶BASED Brooklyn
▶KEY RELEASES **Merchandise** – Children Of Desire (2012), **Wiccans** – Field II (2012), **Casanovas In Heat** – Belvidere/Destiny St (2014)
▶RADAR SAYS Specialising in punk and hardcore, Katorga has flirted with disco, garage rock and post-punk. The label's most famous signings, Merchandise, have gone on to strike a deal with 4AD.

Fat Heaven

The intro to Fat Heaven's debut track 'Liar And A Thief' sounds like an American version of 'Teenage Kicks' and in the following three minutes they distil all the qualities of pop-punk through the ages. With their canny ear for melody, it won't be long till they're tearing up venues outside NY.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/fatheaven
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/fatheaven

Nature Thief

On their debut EP 'Moon', Portland quartet Nature Thief mix the darkness of Warpaint with the haunting folk of Cat Power and Vashti Bunyan, and the results are quite special. Finger-picked chords and enchanting vocal harmonies brew across four slow-burning tracks.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/naturethief
▶HEAR THEM soundcloud.com/nature-thief

Rexx

Orange County "cartoon pop" bedroom artist Rex Osterkamp is the mastermind behind Rexx's sweet lo-fi sound, but it's his downcast and despondent demeanour that makes the music so endearing. The delicately sombre psychedelic pop of most recent album 'I Really Tried To Save The Day' is simply captivating.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/rexxband
▶HEAR HIM rexxagain.bandcamp.com

Eerie Wanda

Bosnia-born Marina Tadic recorded her debut album 'Hum' in a Cold War bunker in her adopted Amsterdam – but these warm and gentle folk-pop songs featuring members of Jacco Gardner's band are more likely to settle conflicts than spark them. 'Volcano Lagoon' is as pretty as its picturesque title suggests. Enchanting.
▶SOCIAL facebook.com/eeriewanda2
▶HEAR THEM eeriewanda.bandcamp.com

NEW SOUNDS FROM WAY OUT

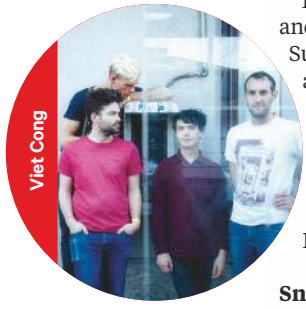
This week's columnist
FELIX WHITE
The Maccabees

THE VINYL FRONTIER

Our tour ended a little over month ago, supporting Kasabian. In an attempt to wrestle back some kind of routine from the sudden disorientation, I found the best way to deal with opening in these huge arenas – which during the day are empty and freezing – was to buy vinyl in every town. There were intensely hungover days where I spent 20 quid a go on records I already own twice. I thought of it as some kind of comfort blanket.

I also stumbled across quite a lot of stuff I'd never heard, though – mostly acting on the instinct that if it was on in the shop and I wanted to know what it was, I'd buy it. Among others, this led me to **Chelsea Wolfe**'s 'Pain Is Beauty', alongside oldies like Bonnie Prince Billy's 'Singers Grave A Sea of Tongues' and Micah P Hinson's 'Micah P Hinson & The Gospel of Progress'. Granted, not all of these are necessarily new. But they are precious little finds for me, and if you haven't already it's worth you finding them too.

During said tour we coincided with Ben Howard and caught the end of his show at Dublin Olympia. Supporting were **Hiss Golden Messenger**, and although we missed their show, Ben and co spent most of the time raving about them.


Viet Cong

Outside of random tour finds, **Viet Cong** are fantastic. Magic guitar playing and great dynamics. There's something unnerving and special about the way 'Continental Shelf' sounds, so it's a good start. I love the video too, which is directed by Yoonha Park.

Finally, I was happy to see **Slaves** and **The Amazing Snakeheads** on the NME Awards Tour bill. I mentioned them a while back in this column. Along with **Bad Breeding**, they played the best gigs I'd seen in all of 2014, and though the Snakeheads are now a different line-up, that debut album is still brilliant. Along with **Fat White Family,** it makes for one of the best line-ups in a long time. I've never seen **Palma Violets** either, so I'm hoping to make it down to one of the gigs.

"I've been buying vinyl on tour, like some kind of comfort blanket"

As far as our own new music is concerned, as some have pointed out to me recently, it's taken longer than we said it would. But that's normally the way. The Kasabian tour was as testing a home as you could find to air songs from it for the first time, but we played four, and to be honest they already feel like the strongest songs in our set. I can't wait to play them again.

Next week: Happyness

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Noel Gallagher, photographed in London for *NME*, December 2014

"I'VE GOT BLOOD ON MY HANDS AND FUCKING CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATH"

Noel Gallagher's upcoming second solo album may be called 'Chasing Yesterday', but that doesn't mean an Oasis reunion is any closer, he tells Tom Howard. At least not if Paul Weller has anything to do with it...

PHOTOS BY SHAMIL TANNA

It takes Noel Gallagher roughly 40 seconds to rip into his first yarn of the day. He has, he says, just got back from a European press run for his upcoming second solo album, 'Chasing Yesterday'. While there, he was exposed to previously unknown interrogation techniques.

"These two guys walked into the room and set up separate tape recorders and notebooks and I was like, 'What the fuck's going on here, then? Is this for two magazines?', and they said, (*adopts German accent*) 'No, for the same paper', and I was like, 'Why are there two journalists, then?', and one said, 'It's good cop/bad cop', and I said, 'Well, who's who?', and the other guy just said, 'That is for you to decide'. I was thinking, 'Fuck, it's the Gestapo.'"

It gets better.

"So the basic premise was that one guy would ask a question, I'd answer it, and the other guy would completely fucking rip it apart. And this guy was saying, 'So, we have your new record in our office, and I have to tell you we were very scared before we pressed ↣

the play button', and I said, 'Why?' The other guy came in and said, 'Because we did not like your last record.' Ha ha! And I was like, 'Fucking hell! Is this it, then? Are you gonna just sit here and fucking rip the shit out of me?'

"It was funny. The guy would say, 'So I recall interviewing you in 1995, and then you told me you were going to be the biggest rock star in the world', and I said, 'Oh right', and the other guy said, 'So what happened?' Ha ha!"

It's no secret that Noel is a raconteur, and an intensely good-humoured storyteller. There's the one about eating in an Indian restaurant in Manchester with Mani from The Stone Roses, at which he got recognised for being the bloke who appeared on Channel 4's *Gogglebox* in October last year with Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell. There's the one about the studio engineer who couldn't handle a day with Noel and Johnny Marr in the studio because they talk so much. And the one about being lucky enough to have a gym in his garage so "I don't have to go to a fucking gym and look at other middle-aged men in ill-fitting clothes".

Then there's this, about his neighbour and good friend Paul Weller: "We live on the same fucking street, it's weird. He lives opposite, and I used to come out of my front door and he'd be on his balcony (*mimes taking a drag*) smoking a cigarette in the summer like that: (*shouts in a Weller accent, which is used throughout, where appropriate*) 'ALRIGHT, GEEEEEEZ! WHAAAAAT'S HAPPENING?', and shouting across the street.

"I went to the launch party of his clothes thing [he launched the label Real Stars Are Rare in October] and he was kinda, 'Have you seen 'em?', and I said, 'Yeah, I've seen them there', and he's going, 'Well go and have a fucking look at 'em', and I'm like, 'I can see 'em from here', and he's going, 'No, come on, you've gotta fucking feel 'em', and he made me go over and I was going, 'Yes, it's a cuff, fucking brilliant', and he's going, 'Good bit of fucking gear that, mate, you wanna fucking get some', and I was like, 'If I wanted to dress like you I'd fucking get some, but I don't, thank you very much.'"

He's 47, been in the game for 24 years, and still seems to love every minute. Even when telling the photographer with ever-so-slightly threatening glee that "the only thing I hate more than fucking photoshoots are fucking video shoots", he's grinning. Noel Gallagher is clearly excited.

Noel's new album,

'Chasing Yesterday', was finished on July 13 last year – the day of the World Cup final – but isn't coming out until March 2. He's having to wait because Noel Gallagher albums are only allowed to be released in October and March ("something to do with TV shows and Glastonbury" he told Absolute Radio last year), and they missed October because of last year's 'Definitely Maybe' and '(What's The Story) Morning Glory?' reissues.

His giant past will always influence his present. But the legacy he leaves behind with Oasis, as well as the mould-breaking steps he took with 2011's 'Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds', has freed him up to experiment. Take 'Chasing Yesterday' opener 'The Riverman', which features a Pink Floyd-like guitar solo and a saxophone player "summoned from a smoky room in 1963, and is fucking amazing. It's my favourite track on the album, and one of my favourites I've ever done." Nothing that'll blow the minds of Flying Lotus fans, but new for Noel.

There's sax on 'The Right Stuff', too; a song that began life on the ill-fated Noel Gallagher and Amorphous Androgynous album ("that will never see the light of day") but has been recut to fit 'Chasing Yesterday'. "The one on this record is vastly different from the first one, which had a lot of noodling and fucking about. It's become quite psychedelic, jazz, fucking whatever you wanna call it."

Also from the Amorphous Androgynous sessions is 'The Mexican'. "We were doing another song that will never see the light of day, and at the end I was playing bass and not liking what I was doing, so started messing about with an effects pedal and played a riff (*sings it*) and everybody leapt up and went, 'What's that?!' So they looped it and put a drumbeat on it and... it's a little bit different." The riffs and the cowbell are a bit Queens Of The Stone Age, perhaps? "I thought The Rolling Stones, and Johnny Marr when he heard it said, 'That's fucking T Rex.' But if it's a cross between T Rex, The Rolling Stones and Queens Of The Stone Age, fucking hell, I'll take that any day."

The lyrics in 'The Mexican' are interesting, too. At one point Noel sings about the "*revolution*", so his pal Russell Brand is "gonna use it on his next concert tour, or whatever it is he does these days". Elsewhere he's singing about "*kids on crack*", a line "lifted from that fucking ridiculous thing David Cameron said about hugging hoodies and crackheads and giving them a bit of love. They need a fucking baseball bat right across the fucking skull. That track comes after a run of quite intense and emotional and... not dark, dark is not the word, but navy-blue songs, and I needed something to lighten the mood. It's not the greatest thing I've ever written but it is gonna fucking smash the arse out of every live gig."

Another tune written with gigs in mind is 'Lock All The Doors', which was written 23 years ago in Oasis' very early days and has a bit of 'Morning Glory' (the song, not the album) about

Noel on...

...why that Amorphous Androgynous album will never come out

"Initially when they delivered it they managed to pull off the trick of recording the quietest CD of all time. When I got it I was like, 'Is it broke?!' But for all the great ideas on it... I was in the middle of a tour, that last album had blown up, the mixes weren't right. And by the time I got back off tour I was just like, 'I'm not fucking putting out another record, I can't be arsed'. I was frazzled and had glandular fever. I was fucked."

...Oasis tracks in the archives

"There are little bridges and tiny bits. There's a bootleg on the internet that I haven't even got, called 'Tales From The Basement' or something, and there's a whole fucking 11 or 12 songs on there that are all pre-Alan McGee. There are certain bits I can hear that popped up on 'Be Here Now' or whatever, so there's no great fully formed songs. Were they recorded at the same time as 'Married With Children'? Yeah. That's where we did that. It belongs to Mani, that house. Mark Coyle was renting it. Mani's still got the house. It's become a bit of a Manchester landmark."

...the lost album with Death In Vegas

"We did it before we went to do 'Don't Believe The Truth' [in 2005], and much like the Amorphous project, it just didn't work out. Me and Liam both sang. It was a bit of a weird time, but we had a great time doing it. Liam had done that 'Scorpio Rising' thing with them and said we should use them, and I was like, 'Yeah, fuck it, let's do it'. But it never came out."

it. It reminds me of what Noel once said about it: "When Liam sings the first line, you know you're at a fucking gig. Things fucking kick off after that." When you write songs like that, do you ever think it could do with a bit of Liam? "Not now, no. A guy asked me the other day if I ever think Liam would've sounded great singing the last album. I'm like, 'Well, in as much as I think fucking Marc Bolan would sound great singing 'The fucking Mexican', but that's not likely to ever happen, is it. And I wouldn't mind Johnny Rotten singing something or, y'know, John Lennon. What the fuck?"

The last time Noel saw Liam was at the Etihad Stadium on May 11 last year, the day Manchester City won the Premier League. "I was in the directors box, obviously, and he was outside selling burgers, and one of the directors asked if I wanted to go on the pitch with the team, and I was like, 'Fucking yeah', so I went on the pitch and in the tunnel before, I said to [club captain] Vincent Kompany, 'Give us your armband', and he gave me it, so I was wearing it in the bar afterwards, and I was sitting there talking to somebody, and someone came up behind me and tried to take the armband off and I was like, 'Fucking get off of it', and it was Liam. And he was like, 'Fucking hell, man, you knobhead, you shouldn't have that, I should fucking have that.' And that's how it started. And I was like, 'Oh yeah, alright, and how are you?' Every time I see him he is still being a bit of a fucking cheeky cunt. And he's still putting out the persona of the angry barking dog."

"THE RECORD'S QUITE JAZZ, PSYCHEDELIC, WHATEVER YOU WANNA CALL IT"

He is an angry barking dog, though, isn't he? "He is, I mean... when I was doing those interviews in Germany it was after the Beady Eye thing, and one of them said, (*German accent again*) 'I interviewed your brother about two years ago – why is he so angry?', and I'm like, 'I don't fucking know, mate.' They said, 'He was pacing around the room shouting, banging glasses', and I was like, 'Wow, fucking hell, what did you say to him?', and he said, 'Well, I don't know, I just said, "How is your brother?"' Ha ha!"

Noel has, of course, a few things to say about "the Beady Eye thing". "When somebody called me and said they'd split up, sad was not the word, but there was a genuine sigh of like, 'Ah, fuck.' Although it was a shock, I'm not sure anybody was completely surprised, and I'm not gonna speak for them; I'm not an insider and I've not spoken to Liam about it, but I'm surprised he's thrown the towel in. But I don't think he'll be out of the game forever, and I hope he makes a solo record and puts his balls on the line and puts his name on the fucking cover.

"If I was giving him any advice, I think he should stick with Gem [Archer] as his wingman, because they were fucking great mates and Gem really understood him. As for a producer... that guy who done their last album [Dave Sitek]. It was one great tune short of launching something. When I heard 'Flick Of The Finger' on the radio I thought, 'This is more like it', but it didn't go anywhere. It was like a four-minute bridge with no chorus. Admittedly a great bridge.

"And the second one, I loved the vibe of it but... they're a fucking great band but they're not great songwriters. They needed one great song. Not just a hit single, a great fucking tune. 'Rock'n'Roll Star' was never a single, or 'Champagne Supernova', or 'Morning Glory', y'know... But I don't think he'll be out of the game forever."

What do you make of his personal issues? "He's making a fucking mess of things at the moment, but we've all been there. I've been there. Something like that can be a great thing, because you get to the bottom and you cleanse yourself of a lot of fucking shit baggage and you start again. I'm the kind of person that says, 'Fuck it, take it', and I'll start again. And that would be my advice to him."

These days, Noel's more likely to be found hanging out at London's newest celebrity magnet the Chiltern Firehouse than with Liam. But despite the exalted company he keeps, he's aware of and not best pleased with Britain's current music scene. The charts are "all transatlantic dogshit, pseudo-American rubbish, where they go, 'Hey, get a fucking rap in it, that'll sell.'" And about Ed Sheeran headlining three nights at Wembley Stadium this year, he says, "I don't think I can live in a world where that's even possible. When you hear that kind of polished pop and then there's a ginger guy with a fucking guitar it seems subversive, but it's fucking not."

He adds: "It's a strange time, and it seems like the whole thing is embedded for good now, for fucking forever. It's not all over, but it'll go back to the way it was in the early '80s where indie bands are the alternative thing, the lower level. In the early '80s, everyone at indie ↦

> "I HOPE LIAM DOES A SOLO LP, PUTS HIS BALLS ON THE LINE AND HIS NAME ON THE COVER"

labels, even major labels, were trying to push this music to the fore because everything else was shit, and maybe it'll happen again, but I don't see it for the next decade."

In a Radio 4 interview late last year, Noel bemoaned a lack of "working-class rage" in British music. But what about, say, Sleaford Mods? "They're like fucking Brown Bottle in *Viz*. There's no joy in that, is there? It's just two guys, one of whom's just shouting like Brown Bottle about fucking cider and fucking shit chicken. Yeah, that would've been fun, wouldn't it, at Knebworth? 'Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and while we're all here...' – while all the people at the back are on acid and E – 'round of applause for the miners, wahey.' Fuck off.

"Oasis were raging, but we were raging joy and the sun was out in the songs; if you can't see the rage and the yearning to better yourself in rock'n'roll style, you're dead to me. And protest songs: fucking bollocks. 'Cigarettes & Alcohol' is a protest song, and the message in that is: 'Fuck your recession and fuck you and your government, we're gonna have a great time.'"

Sleaford Mods said you've got "blood on your hands" for making things too retro. "Yeah. Well tell them from me that I've got blood on my hands and fucking champagne in the bath. And put that in the big fucking quotes."

What about Catfish And The Bottlemen? They've got some working-class rage. Van McCann is from a council estate in Llandudno and says things like, "When we write songs I think, 'Will 60,000 people sing this back to me?' If not, I get rid of it." Just like Oasis did. "I hope for his sake that he smashes it, because Johnny Borrell used to say the same thing. It's alright saying it, but doing it is another thing. The times are different.

"There was a desperation for the Manics and Oasis and The Verve to be somebody, because we had fuck all. And I'm not about to say it's a bad thing, it's just an observation, but maybe Bastille and Mumford & Sons have got a safety net, so it doesn't matter, and they're making music for different reasons. I'm not saying it's right or it's wrong – there's no right way or wrong way to make music, and I don't think you should wear your working classness as a badge – but that was our lives, we had one fucking shot or we were back on the building sites. You were giving out this vibe that it was essential and vital, and that makes it into the audience and they think, 'This is the fucking greatest thing', because it was important to us, so it must be important to you. We inspired that second wave of The Coral, Arctic Monkeys, Kasabian, The Libertines... and after that there's been nothing."

> "WELLER SAYS THAT IF I EVER GO BACK IN OASIS THAT'LL BE IT BETWEEN US"

Paul Weller on...

...'Chasing Yesterday'

"I really like it, I think it's great. It's one of those things you've got to hear a few times – two or three listens, I reckon – but I thought it was great. It's a little bit like part two but in a great way – he's got great songs and that's what he does, great melodies and choruses. He's singing and playing well on it, it's a good record."

...encouraging Noel not to reform Oasis

"Why would he need to? He's flying at the moment. I don't think he needs to. There's always exceptions, but generally speaking I'm fucking bored stiff of reunions. I know it's popular with people, but I don't get it – I don't get the whole nostalgia thing. It's just become a business, hasn't it?"

Because Noel Gallagher is Noel Gallagher, he can't help writing songs that'll get people talking. In Oasis, he always denied the word "*brother*" in the lyrics to 'The Masterplan' or the "*We need each other, we believe in one another*" chorus response to Liam's verse in 'Acquiesce' had anything to do with Liam. On 'Chasing Yesterday' is a track called 'You Know We Can't Go Back' that, naturally, people will assume is about an Oasis reunion. But no. "I had to change a line in it because there's a bit that says '*take me to my lover's arms*' in the second verse, but initially it had a mention of the word 'brother', which fitted a bit better than 'lover' and told the story.

"But I thought I couldn't go there because I just don't want Japanese interviewers and Scandinavians and Germans going, (*revives German accent*) 'You say "brother" in your song – it's obvious you love the guy', and it's like, 'Oh fucking hell, OK, whatever.' It's about a boy and a girl preparing to run away from the situation they're in, and one of them turning to the other and saying, 'We're going, this is it, we can't go back.' It's actually genius."

The most endearing thing about 'Chasing Yesterday' is how fun it is. In Oasis, it was sort of Noel's job to be the thoughtful one, the older brother. Now he's just Noel Gallagher, solo artist. For the first time in his career he's enjoying collaborating: with Johnny Marr on next single 'The Ballad Of The Mighty I', with Damon Albarn at some point ("He's got to finish his tour and I've got to go out on mine, so not in the near future, but I'd definitely do it"), and with whoever he can persuade to come to the Teenage Cancer Trust shows he's curating in March.

But most pressingly with Paul Weller, whose new album Noel says he plays on and which he describes as "fucking amazing". Noel talks about him with great affection, and says that "in a roundabout kind of way" he's helped him work out how to become a solo artist, as Weller himself did when he left both The Jam and The Style Council. He uses a tough-love approach. "He threatens me that if I ever go back in Oasis that'll be it between us. He always says, (*Weller accent*) 'You fucking heard all these fucking things about your fucking reunion?', and I'm like, 'Yeah, I know', and he goes, 'You're not fucking doing it?', and I'm like, 'No', and he's going, 'Good good good.'

"Basically, if Oasis ever did get back together, which is highly unlikely, I'd have to leave London and move back to Manchester... because he'd put my fucking windows in." ■

RENEGADES OF PUNK

After almost nine years away, Sleater-Kinney have returned. And with their new, eighth album – the knockout 'No Cities To Love' – they sound as vital as ever. Laura Snapes meets them in London

PHOTO: MARINA CHAVEZ

Sleater-Kinney at Portland Meadows racetrack, Oregon, November 2014

In 2015, Sleater-Kinney return in a strange position: the seven albums they recorded before going on hiatus in 2006 gave them a hefty legacy, but nobody came along to take on their mantle. "Something that I really noticed, once I had distance from the band, is that there was really no clear predecessor or successor," says Carrie Brownstein, one of the legendary Pacific Northwest trio's two singer-guitarists, on a December weekday in central London. "You assume, cyclically, that there will be somebody that comes and takes your place. That never happened. And I would have been fine if it had – like, OK, there's the next iteration of who we are. So for me [reuniting] feels like a strange obligation. But not an unpleasant one."

Another Sleater-Kinney? Wishful thinking. The irreplaceable Olympia band – back with their eighth album, 'No Cities To Love', after almost nine years away – came from an era and environment when popular rock music stood for pleasure, empathy and freedom from oppression. They were "America's best rock band" (noted cultural critic Greil Marcus) and "America's best punk band. EVER" (*Rolling Stone*). But they were also a feminist band singing about subjugation and a political band, indicting George Bush for "*hiding while working men rush in to give their lives*" after 9/11. They were a *heavy* band. "It's not a band you can do unless the three of us are 100 per cent dedicated to it while we're doing it," says drummer Janet Weiss, who joined in 1997. "It's something that we have to live up to."

As singer-guitarist Corin Tucker once explained, Sleater-Kinney operated from the principle that "you can love rock'n'roll and be enraged by it". Their self-titled 1995 debut owes a debt to Bikini Kill's insurrectionist feminist fire; they would later weld 1960s girl-band melodies and handclaps to gnarled fretwork reminiscent of Wire and Hüsker Dü, forging their own unique interplay in the process. On what was their last album, 2005's 'The Woods', they railed against a new wave of post-punk copyists ("*You're such a bore, 1984/Nostalgia, you're using it like a whore*") on a sprawling set that drew from Zeppelin and Hendrix. They reclaimed the distended sounds that punk had rejected, flexing the reactionary impulse that meant they never made the same record twice and let them know when it was time to quit.

On August 12, 2006, Sleater-Kinney played their last gig in Portland's Crystal Ballroom. They had announced their hiatus six weeks earlier, in a statement that thanked fans but explained nothing. By that time Corin was married with a young son; the natural assumption was that the band was over because she wanted to be closer to her family, though last year Carrie said that her own severe anxiety issues were an equal factor.

Watching her bandmates suffer, "it became very obvious: we can just stop. Let's just stop," says Janet. "I love making music with these guys. It's difficult and rewarding and challenging. It's a big deal. But no band should take over your life. Your ability to take control and take a break is very important."

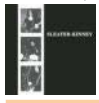
"I would have rather gone out then than grind to a halt and fade into an irrelevant, infertile period of creativity," says Carrie. "That is my nightmare. It was like we had driven ourselves to the edge of a cliff, then stopped before we went over."

The return home was an anticlimax, but it lead to healthier situations. Carrie and Fred Armisen conceived the award-winning comedy show *Portlandia*, which lovingly skewers their hometown's hippy character; she also wrote a column for NPR, appeared in dysfunctional-family drama *Transparent*, and has a memoir and more film projects on the slate. From 2010 to 2012, Carrie and Janet were half of Wild Flag; Janet also played with Stephen Malkmus, Bright Eyes and The Shins, and is still in Quasi and the self-explanatory supergroup Drumgasm. Corin released two solo albums and had a daughter in 2008. "It was good for me to let [Sleater-Kinney] go and pursue other things," she says. "To just live. Being a rock star and being a mother, they're total opposite identities – you are so responsible for someone else's needs that your own needs are almost non-existent."

ROCK'N' ROLL FUN

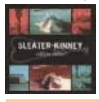
Sleater-Kinney's discography, in brief

Sleater-Kinney
Chainsaw, 1995



Their abrasive, untrammelled debut, recorded on a trip to Australia in 1994.
▶KEY TRACK 'Be Yr Mama'

Call The Doctor
Chainsaw, 1996



A bit lighter than the debut. 'I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone' adds humour – and John Goodmanson's production skills – to their arsenal.
▶KEY TRACK 'Call The Doctor'

Dig Me Out
Kill Rock Stars, 1997

Their first great album and the first to feature Janet Weiss on drums.
▶KEY TRACK 'One More Hour'

The Hot Rock
Kill Rock Stars, 1999

S-K's softest record, produced by Roger Moutenot, a frequent collaborator with Yo La Tengo.
▶KEY TRACK 'Get Up'

"It's a very powerful feeling to be in Sleater-Kinney"

Janet Weiss

They were never estranged: for a brief moment they all cohered on *Portlandia* – Corin was a guest star, while Janet works as the locations manager. ("Being a musician does not afford you a lot of security," she explains. "I would rather get a job than sell my songs to commercials.") The show was indirectly responsible for their musical reunion, too: in autumn 2012, Carrie and Fred were at Corin's house, watching upcoming episodes. The question of whether Sleater-Kinney would ever play live again arose, supposedly for the first time since the hiatus.

"Sleater-Kinney is very demanding, it's a big project," says Corin. "And so even when we were discussing it, everyone had to be like, 'Are you sure? Is everyone ready to go for it?'"

Janet said yes immediately: "Playing in a band with that sort of weight and meaning is pretty much what I live for. It's a very powerful feeling to be the drummer in Sleater-Kinney."

The idea of a nostalgia tour without new music was swiftly dismissed, their aim being to reinvent the band for 2014. "To see if there was still a viable artistic chemistry there," says Corin, "what the different life experiences – and also just time – would add to what we could bring to the band." The remastering and re-release of their first seven albums on vinyl became a key part of their return, she says: "It was a sense of empowerment, of representing ourselves."

(From left) Carrie Brownstein, Janet Weiss, Corin Tucker

That became 'Start Together', a handsome boxset released in October that secretly contained a seven-inch of their comeback single, 'Bury Our Friends', with its corroded riff and commanding chorus: "*Exhume our idols! Bury our friends!*" It was one of the hardest songs to finish in an already protracted writing process. In autumn 2012, the trio started playing together before Janet suggested that Carrie and Corin go away and rediscover their strange shared vernacular. "This record has a succinctness that we wanted that wasn't going to happen with three people improvising in a room," says Carrie. "It was too amorphous."

Even once Carrie and Corin isolated the process, they still had to deter each other from dipping into their "intoxicating, innate chemistry", pushing beyond anything that sounded like Sleater-Kinney. The sound was forged in Carrie's basement, a "very dead room", forcing them to really attack their instruments to create an impact, "because you can't rely on anything becoming expansive in there", she says. "There's a suffocation to all the sounds; a pointedness and a slight anxiety and strangulation." It's the opposite of the aerated 'The Woods', though she admits that if they'd followed up that record two years later rather than 10, their reactionary nature would have made it "more extreme".

By Janaury 2013, they were ready to record, and called John Goodmanson, who had worked on four of their records (excepting the debut, 1999's 'The Hot Rock' and 'The Woods'), to ask if he would produce. They spent 10 "crazy productive" days in San Francisco before even shorter spells in Seattle and Portland. Although John went to college with Carrie and Corin, there was no sitting around getting sentimental, no consideration of legacy beyond trying to make the greatest record possible. Only after finishing it did they reflect. "Like, oh, this is heavy, this is gonna be a heavy thing when the world hears it," says John.

'No Cities To Love' opens with 'Price Tag', a throttled squall demonstrating Corin's inimitable bluesy wail. It's an anti-consumerism anthem that came from living through the recession in Portland, and expresses empathy for workers trying to fit inside a lamentable system – where Bush told America to "go shopping" as the financial crisis hit and corporate personhood gives companies the equivalent of human rights.

"That came from feeling the really great consequences of not having compassion and empathy for the working poor in our country, seeing the effect on working women and their children," says Corin, calling it "the failure of America" if there is no clear pathway out of the oppression of poverty. "I think that if we don't speak out about that kind of power imbalance that we have in America, then we aren't succeeding as a country."

It's an empathetic, collective take on an issue that's too often dismissed as someone else's problem. 'No Cities To Love' rejects oppression while showing its effects on the individual: the lyrics are full of bodies scarred by fitting predetermined moulds, and the fight to construct a powerful personal exterior. The heavy 'No Anthems' is the kind of emphatic ode to collective action with which Sleater-Kinney made their name, surging with constructive anger: "*I want an anthem/ A singular anthem/ An answer and a force/To feel rhythm in silence/ A weapon, not violence/ A power, power source*".

'No Cities To Love' isn't explicitly a political record – one of four songs that didn't make the album, 'Here We Come', was a Corin-led song about America's involvement in Iraq. Rather, the angle is the personal as political.

"We try to empower people, empower women to be confident and stand up for what they believe in and band together," says Janet. "What we stand for can help individuals have the strength to face these other things that are real and very intense, very overwhelming."

Sleater-Kinney are acutely aware of their power as a band, which they relish: frequently referring to their work as "singular", while Janet lays bare their ambition "to be daunting and scary and intense." But they thrive on vulnerability, too. Corin's lyrics on 'No Cities...' in particular are laced with anxiety. Confidence has always been something she struggled with, she says. "It's not something that has gone away now I'm older. It's being a little bit of a diva and having low self-esteem at the same time – those things are really intertwined in a way that's kind of bizarre, but fuels me. And I understand that a bit more now and am accepting of it."

In Corin's view, that tension is key to what makes a great artist. Hunger reminds us that we're alive. She wrote 'Surface Envy' to capture the struggle and triumph of Sleater-Kinney's reunion, essentially singing them back into being. "*I took the long way down, lost track of myself*", she howls, before Carrie joins her to yell the chorus: "*We win, we lose, only together do we break the rules*". "That is definitely written with the idea of the moment when we were talking about being a band again," says Corin. "And what an incredible opportunity and a giant challenge that is to me – being a mom and trying to have this really intense career."

Sleater-Kinney's very existence breaks rules that surround women, motherhood, rock stardom. Corin and Carrie are in their early forties, while Janet turns 50 in September. "A mom deciding to probe her inner creativity and allowing a darkness or a commentary on culture is kind of revolutionary," Janet says of Corin, while recognising the contradiction that she and Carrie are also exceptions for choosing *not* to have kids. "Proving that being demure and passive and quiet are not all the qualities that embody a woman. There's aggressiveness and there can be dominance; there can be power, there can be control."

Their return might last just one album – filming *Portlandia* in the summer puts a natural cap on their comeback tour, which hits the UK in March. "It allows us to really appreciate the time we have together, and put some natural stopping points on the tours and on the work so we don't have the possibility of overdoing it," says Janet. But during that time, they'll stand for nothing less than making a significant cultural impact. "We're not just going back and living those shows and living our lives as they were then," says the drummer. "We want progress." ■

All Hands On The Bad One

Kill Rock Stars, 2000

With Goodmanson back on production, 'All Hands...' is S-K's poppiest album.

▶KEY TRACK '#1 Must Have'

One Beat

Kill Rock Stars, 2002

Written in the aftermath of 9/11, the album was intended to be "a voice in the silence" while most of their peers failed to comment on America's dire leadership.

▶KEY TRACK 'Far Away'

The Woods

Sub Pop, 2005

Produced by frequent Flaming Lips collaborator Dave Fridmann, 'The Woods' is a cathartic set full of wigged-out guitar solos.

▶KEY TRACK 'Let's Call It Love'

No Cities To Love

Sub Pop, 2015

2015's first great record: 10 tracks of corroded guitar work underpinning a powerful treatise on power and identity.

▶KEY TRACK 'No Cities To Love'

UPTOWN BOY

Even Mark Ronson admits nobody was waiting for him to make a new record. But, with help from Tame Impala's Kevin Parker, a Pulitzer-winning author and Stevie Wonder, he wound up with the biggest Number One since 'Get Lucky'. Greg Cochrane meets him

PHOTOS BY ANDY FORD

'Get Lucky' had it. '99 Problems' had it. 'Crazy In Love' had it. Mark Ronson's 'Uptown Funk' *has* it: that instant classic quality. It's in the barbershop bassline, the subtle echoes of 'Thriller', the fact that Bruno Mars' verses are so ludicrously magnetic (*"Gonna kiss myself, I'm so pretty"*), and that the chorus is just a brass hook. Unsurprisingly, it's broken all kinds of streaming and sales records, shooting to the top of the charts all over the world.

Meeting the producer on a Monday afternoon in mid-December, the idea is to talk about Ronson's forthcoming fourth solo album, 'Uptown Special', but a certain song is dominating proceedings. 'Uptown Funk' has been the UK Number One for 18 hours, and Ronson – in the midst of a promotional whirlwind – is dizzy on a mixture of pride and jet lag.

We're in the control room of the 39-year-old's recently constructed north London studio – a homely space dominated by ↦

Mark Ronson
at Tileyard
Studio, London,
December 15, 2014

an enormous wood-clad mixing desk, racks of analogue keyboards, LPs and scraps of handwritten lyrics. A poster of Stevie Wonder looks down from the wall. "It's a great feeling," he says, his transatlantic accent almost unconvincing in its slow drawl. "I never really thought anytime I was making a record that it's in the realms of what a pop smash might be – so I wasn't really thinking about a Number One, but I'll take it."

During the seven months that he and Mars spent working on it, however, they knew they had *something* on their hands. "We all had that feeling you get very occasionally when you make a song and you're all locked in the same zone. That thing where you get in the car and you want to listen to the demo 18 times on the way home. Every now and then you get one of those. It felt like it could be one of those all-time party tunes. As a DJ who knows the importance of those type of tunes and how much you rely on those in a set, I was thinking it would be great to make one of those."

He admits he was "blindsided" by Simon Cowell's decision to have *X Factor* contestant Fleur East cover the track before it was even out in the UK – the ability to purchase performances from the show meaning that the public might become more familiar with her version than the original – but insists it was "good to get the song out there". "I can't be mad at someone making a cover," he reasons. "I made a whole album of it."

Ronson has been a chart fixture for over a decade now, at least since the release of 'Ooh Wee' in 2003, and something of an omnipresence since producing Amy Winehouse's 2006 classic, 'Back To Black', and in particular her cover of The Zutons' 'Valerie'. He's been DJing in high-profile New York clubs for even longer. Yet he still has something of the reluctant supporting actor about him: self-deprecating and refreshingly devoid of bluster, and perennially weirded out by his innate knack for this songwriting business. He readily admits that if he listened to his instincts, none of his recent chart success would ever have happened.

"It definitely took me a while to get to the point where I knew why I needed to make another record," he confesses. "Because, first of all, no-one's checking for the new Mark Ronson solo record, not the public, not my label. I have no problems saying that."

At the end of the promotion for his 2010 album 'Record Collection', Mark Ronson's head was in an odd place. That album featured some of his best work, tracks like 'Bang Bang Bang' (with Q-Tip and MNDR), 'Somebody To Love Me' (with Boy George and Miike Snow's Andrew Wyatt) and 'The Bike Song' (featuring Spank Rock and, oddly, The View's Kyle Falconer). Yet it sold a fraction as many copies as his controversial covers record, 2007's 'Version'.

It did something much more valuable than that, though: it restored his credibility. Remember, this is the Mark Ronson who in some critics' eyes had seemingly waltzed from a privileged upbringing (his mother was a socialite, his step-father Mick Jones from Foreigner; he was once baby-sat by Rod Stewart and went to Michael Jackson's house to play) into a career in music. He DJed at fashion parties and made a ton of cash with his second solo album, where he tarted up a bunch of classic songs with a few trumpets and a wardrobe of bad suits. He took a lot of stick. Then came his reinvention. Writing, singing and producing 'Record Collection', people realised there was more to Ronson than a stylish quiff and membership to The Ivy: for all his bona fides, he's essentially a rabid music obsessive.

Even after rebuilding his reputation, however, Ronson was unsure of his next move. Or if there would even be a next move. He recalls a period of doubt around 2013. "It's three years after my last album came out. If I have to go out DJing and play the 'Bang Bang Bang' intro routine again, I wanna kill myself. So I kinda started thinking, what kind of record do I want to make?" He tried holding some recording sessions to spark ideas. "I'd been fucking around, doing beats, collaborating with some young producers that I think are really exciting, like Lil Silva and Skream, but I didn't hear me in any of this stuff. I heard me forcing myself into another world."

While he searched for inspiration, he continued to produce albums from some huge names – including Duran Duran's 2011 comeback 'All You Need Is Now' and Paul McCartney's 'New', from 2013. The irony was it took a producer for Mark Ronson to be able to realise what he wanted to do next – the first time he had ever worked with one. He booked in time with Jeff Bhasker, the award-winning songwriter who's worked on records such as Kanye West and Jay Z's 'Watch The Throne' and Lana Del Rey's 'Born To Die'.

"I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT A NUMBER ONE, BUT I'LL TAKE IT"
MARK RONSON

'UPTOWN SPECIAL': THE KEY PLAYERS

Who exactly helped funk up Mark Ronson's new album?

Bruno Mars
'Uptown Funk' is the award-winning diminutive pop megastar's fifth UK Number One. While his soppy ballads may not be everyone's cup of tea, his showmanship – on display in the single's video – is pretty undeniable.

Jeff Bhasker
Originally from Kansas, Bhasker's big break came co-producing Kanye West's '808s & Heartbreak'. He's also co-written some of the biggest songs of the last 10 years, including Bruno Mars' 'Locked Out Of Heaven', Fun's 'We Are Young' and Jay Z's 'Run This Town'.

Michael Chabon
The 51-year-old from Washington DC is a distinguished novelist and screenwriter, best known for 2000's *The Amazing Adventures Of Kavalier & Clay*, which earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2001. His screenwriting credits include *Spider-Man 2*.

GUY EPPEL, CORBIS

'Uptown Special' is the British producer's fourth album

Eighteen months ago, the pair were drinking whisky and writing songs at Bhasker's home in Venice, California, where they hatched the plan for the album. They'd decided they wanted to find a new, young female voice to appear on a track, but couldn't find the sound they wanted from any contemporary artists. They planned a road trip through the Southern states, nicknaming it the 'Mississippi Mission'. What they found in the bars and churches there reaffirmed Ronson's love for the sound of R&B, soul and Motown. "That's the music that will always have a lock on me," he says. After holding auditions they discovered the voice Ronson had been looking for in Keyone Starr, a 23-year-old singer from Jackson, Mississippi who appears on album track 'I Can't Lose'. "When you're driving through the Southern states you're pretty spoilt for incredible voices," he says, saying that he hopes to produce her debut album this year.

Ronson and Bhasker settled in Memphis, at Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios – considered the home of the South's legendary soul sound. By this time Ronson had invited collaborators Andrew Wyatt and Tame Impala's Kevin Parker into the process – along with Ronson's favourite modern author, the Pulitzer Prize-winning US novelist Michael Chabon, who accepted Ronson's offer to try writing lyrics for the album, despite not having written a song since being in his college band.

"I was shocked and flattered," Chabon says of the request. "When we began, I had the advantage and the disadvantage of my ignorance. I didn't know how to write lyrics. I didn't know there were things you couldn't do or weren't supposed to do."

Beyond 'Uptown Funk', the other indisputable highlight of 'Uptown Special' is 'Daffodils', the smoky, trippy funk song sung by Parker about coming down from a massive high. "I know Kevin really loves that song, and he was trying to describe the feeling of coming down to Michael Chabon, who is not necessarily a big druggy at all," remembers Ronson. "He said, 'Listen to this song by The Streets' – I think it was 'Blinded By The Lights' – and said, 'That's what I want it to feel like.'"

Chabon wrote the whole of 'Daffodils' on the spot in the studio: "I felt nervous, but Kevin Parker was very gracious. I wanted the lyrics to be as good as anything he could have come up with. In the end he smiled when he was singing, so that was a great experience."

The pieces of the album were coming together, but for Ronson there was still something missing. In mid-2014, trying his luck, he'd approached Stevie Wonder. For Ronson, the idea of having him on the album was a "crazy pipedream". Four months after contacting his management a message arrived confirming that Wonder would head into his own studio a couple of days later to craft his part. Then an email arrived in Ronson's inbox, subject line "linkstevieharpsession".

"I couldn't listen or even open it for half an hour," says Ronson. "It was so overwhelming that my favourite singer/musician – probably 50 per cent of the reason I write music the way I write it – played on this song that I wrote. It was definitely still hard for me to even equate in my brain that's happened. People say, 'What's the one thing that if it ever happened you could retire?' I don't want to retire because I still enjoy making music, but if I had to I'd say the biggest rush would be having Stevie Wonder play on a song."

Recounting this story is as excitable as the typically laidback Ronson gets over the course of our interview. While it's easy for someone who's had plenty of success to be nonchalant about it, the sense with Ronson – as the meticulous process behind this record proves – is that he's much more intent on beating his own personal standards than chart records. His focus and ambitions remain the same. "The greatest thing is always going to be making a song that gives people that feeling, that rush," he says. "I love DJing and playing other people's records because it's fun. I love just being able to have an amazing night in a club, being in a crowd, playing other people's shit, but there's no more satisfying feeling than doing that, but with one of your own songs. That's the ultimate." ■

Kevin Parker, Tame Impala
Ronson and Parker became friends when the pair toured Australia together after the former released 'Record Collection'. Parker co-wrote and appears on three tracks on 'Uptown Special', including 'Daffodils', 'Summer Breaking' and 'Leaving Los Feliz'.

Keyone Starr
The former call centre worker and singer from Jackson, Mississippi was discovered by Ronson and Bhasker on their road trip through the Southern states.

Stevie Wonder
The legendary pianist and singer appears on two tracks on the album, 'Uptown's First Finale' and 'Crack In The Pearl Part II'. He recorded his harmonica part for the former in a studio in Chicago while he was on tour.

Last of the bedroom indie heroes

Belle And Sebastian set out to emulate their shambolic heroes and ended up eclipsing them. Matthew Horton meets the band you can still believe in as they release their disco-tinged ninth album

There has, admits the man who has masterminded, fronted and been the main songwriter in Belle And Sebastian for the last 18 years, "never been a masterplan". Stuart Murdoch, the day after the Glasgow band's Christmas party, continues: "The key thing is that you don't really think about it too much. It is a natural progression." He is as clear, thoughtful and precise as any of his lyrics, assessing how he and his band have evolved over their nine albums. As they ready the release of the bold and punchy 'Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance', Murdoch stands as a torchbearer for an almost defunct breed. Is he the last great bedroom indie hero? "Listen," he says, "I'll take it."

That kind of bookish, cult figure, speaking to a hardcore of fans, feels like a largely 1980s construct, exemplified by troubled poets in anoraks like Morrissey and Lawrence from Felt, but it was Murdoch who carried it into the 1990s. "We were certainly fighting an indie corner," he says. Arriving in 1996 with debut album 'Tigermilk', Belle And Sebastian were DIY par excellence, pressing a mere 1,000 vinyl copies of a record cobbled together by a group who were, at the time, near-strangers. "My influences would change from week to week," he remembers, "but I admired the success of The Smiths, the way it was done in a smash-and-grab way. And I liked the eclectic, catholic and shambolic way bands like Felt and Orange Juice went about things. We tried to replicate it, but we were actually more successful. We reached a wider bunch of folk."

The appeal of the band was in Murdoch's literate songs, each wrapped up in a killer pop melody, and it's a gift that's undiminished. "Stuart's got really quite clear ideas how things should be done," says multi-instrumentalist Sarah Martin, who joined the band in time for second album 'If You're Feeling Sinister'. "He's an incredible force of nature," she adds. "He'll have been out walking in the morning and will come in with a song out of nowhere. It's a source of great envy!" It's a similar story from guitarist and original member Stevie Jackson, who concedes it's "Stuart's band", despite his own longevity, and marvels at Murdoch's sustained appetite. "I think the tunes he came up with for 'Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance' were some of his best," he says. "He was on fire."

Recorded in Atlanta with Animal Collective and Deerhunter producer Ben H Allen, the new album does indeed feature some of Murdoch's finest songs yet. 'Play For Today' is seven minutes of Balearic electronica, a mesmerising duet between Murdoch and Dum Dum Girls' Dee Dee Penny, who had auditioned unsuccessfully for Murdoch's 2014 movie *God Help The Girl* but had such a "great voice" that he resolved to write a song for her. Elsewhere, 'The Everlasting Muse' finds him splicing Eurovision mayhem, bossa nova and Russian folk dance with improbably effective results. "I'd have pushed that to be the opening track," says Jackson. "It's just astonishing."

> **"Failure keeps you going, keeps you hungry"**
> **Stuart Murdoch**

Then there's 'Nobody's Empire', a classic to rank with fan favourites 'The State That I Am In' and 'The Boy With The Arab Strap', and the first Belle And Sebastian song to overtly address Murdoch's ME, a condition that's haunted him since the band's early days and reared up again when making this album. Why open up now? "It's funny you should say 'open up'," says Murdoch, "because it is like coming out, or at least like coming out in the 1970s or 1980s. People don't really know what to do with you. I always kept it to myself because it was simpler." And he could always find solace in the band. "I could always handle music. I was building this self-sufficient music career and it was fine and I got on with it. So many songs have been written off the back of being in a dark place. Not necessarily dark songs; I'm talking about some of my lightest, most frivolous songs, because that's where you want to go."

Over the years, though, a different kind of frustration has threatened to challenge Belle And Sebastian's staying power: Murdoch's purist indie ideals, which got in the way of a push to the big time. Jackson certainly thinks there was a moment when they could have kicked onwards, possibly around the time they picked up the Best Newcomer award at the 1999 Brits. "Stuart just kind of ignored it all," says Martin. "It bugged me at the time. You know, we should be taking advantage of this stuff, but in terms of longevity it's a marathon, not a sprint!"

"I'm too wrapped up in our present narrative to look back and worry about missed opportunities," claims Murdoch, but the new century did reveal a slightly more ambitious Belle And Sebastian. "We've always failed to match the success of our peers, but this failure keeps you going, keeps you hungry."

This hunger bled into new working techniques for 'Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance' where, according to Jackson, Murdoch didn't "turn up and start playing the guitar, saying, 'It goes like this.' He just started clicking his fingers and telling us the chords straight out of his head. For a lot of the album, he didn't even go to an instrument – it was just in his head and he used the group as an instrument." This approach extends to the album title, its meaning still elusive. "I haven't come up with a good answer yet!" says Murdoch. "I always have titles hanging around, and write them down when I wake up or last thing at night, when something occurs to you in a dreamy way."

And that's Belle And Sebastian – they sound assured but are really bobbing along, slipping imperceptibly from indie heroes to pure pop auteurs. "We had a meeting with our manager over breakfast this morning," says Murdoch, "and you actually do ask those bigger picture questions: 'What are we?', 'Where are we going?' If we just do the same as other bands, we'll just become the same as other bands – and we never used to do that. If you look at recent pictures of us, we seem to get smaller as time goes on, as if they want to hide us. Like they're embarrassed that six middle-aged people are still attempting to make contemporary music."

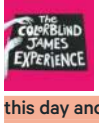
But they still have that hardcore of fans to rely on, right? "I think the 'hardcore' is a bit of a myth, really," contends Murdoch, "because if we hadn't picked up new fans, then you're talking about a couple of thousand people who bought 'If You're Feeling Sinister' and formed mailing lists. When you think about indie, you just think of girls in floral dresses. I'm sure those guys are still around, but if you're going to play the Royal Albert Hall or the Hydro in Glasgow, then that's normal folk showing up."

It's almost as if he has a masterplan. ■

Three great indie records

Stuart Murdoch raids his extensive collection

The Colorblind James Experience
Considering A Move To Memphis Fundamental, 1987

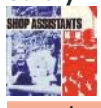


"This was played a lot on John Peel's show in the 1980s. It's outstanding to this day and is one I'd love to cover. It's just a great narrative about a chap who dreams about moving to Memphis and visiting Graceland."

Felt
Primitive Painters
Cherry Red, 1985

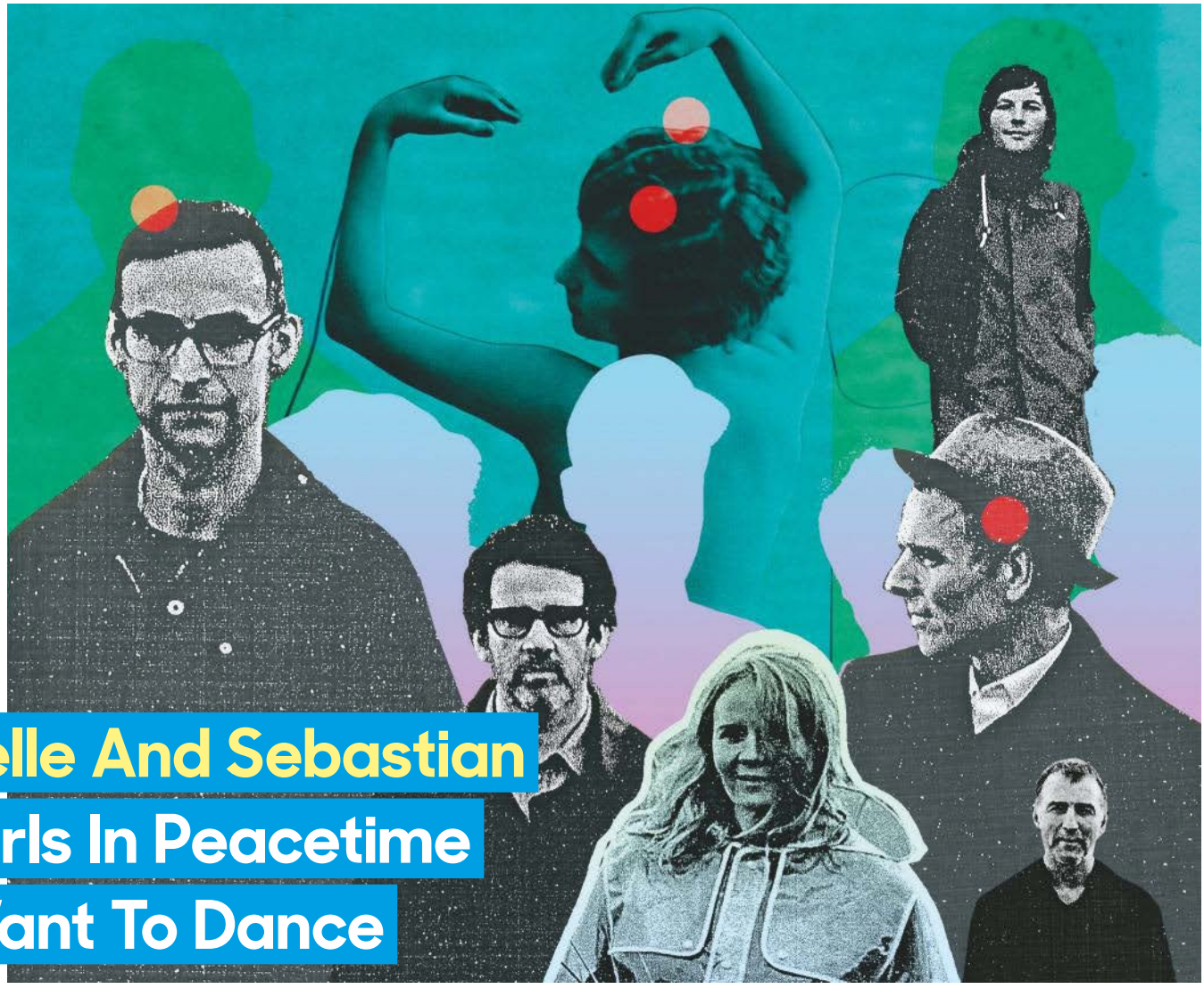
"This is far removed from the typical indie record – no jangle, no young boy moaning about a girl – it's just a strange and marvellous sound. It's a sort of collaboration between Felt and Cocteau Twins – Liz Fraser on vocals and Robin Guthrie producing."

The Shop Assistants
Safety Net 53rd & 3rd, 1986



"These guys were from Edinburgh. 'Safety Net' is really short, but it just has a great buzzsaw guitar sound and a great vocal from Alex Taylor. I saw them a couple of times and they got a hard time from the Glasgow audience. The guitarist ended up kicking someone in the head!"

Reviews



Belle And Sebastian Girls In Peacetime Want To Dance

The Glasgow veterans flit between acoustic indie and disco bangers on their camp and scatterbrained ninth album

Many a hard-rocking band has mellowed with age. It's all part of the smooth downhill jog to the day you ask for Werther's Originals on your rider. But for Belle And Sebastian there's never been any softening to be done. With 1996's second album 'If You're Feeling Sinister', the band captured the hearts of a certain type of indie kid, speaking to the mopey, insecure homunculus via character songs about aspirationally dysfunctional Glaswegian proto-hipsters. That, the band acknowledged, couldn't last forever, and their sixth album, 2003's 'Dear Catastrophe Waitress', marked a watershed. Out with the juvenilia, in with big Trevor Horn production, prosaic pop songwriting and unbridled whimsy.

Ten years on, the signposts that preceded 'Girls In Peacetime...' didn't augur well for those yearning for a return to something less frivolous. Frontman Stuart Murdoch was talking about the influence of Eurovision and interviewing über-twee comedian Josie Long. He told *NME*: "I said to the band, 'I'm way older now and I don't know what kind of songs you're going to get out of me.'" Deciding to take a different approach, they headed to Atlanta to record with Animal Collective producer Ben H Allen.

The resulting album is one on which much is the same but much is changed, too. It starts with an unbearably arch line ("*Lying in bed, I was feeling French*"), but the same track, opener 'Nobody's Empire', goes on to reveal much about Murdoch himself, referencing his struggle with ME.

It's surprising. As Murdoch has created an imagined world around him, the real world seems to have become less visible. His 2014 movie, *God Help The Girl*, served to

ILLUSTRATION: JIMMY TURRELL

confirm this tendency, being set in a mythical Glasgow where bespectacled boys and girls with eating disorders have amicably complicated relationships while plotting domination of the local indie scene. The band engaged in politics last year, too, voicing support for the Scottish 'Yes' campaign, but on 'Girls In Peacetime...', world issues are explored through the eyes of doomed dreamers: "*Allie, what will you do when there's bombs in the Middle East? You want to hurt yourself*", says one on 'Allie'.

Familiar boxes are ticked. There's the one sung by keyboardist/guitarist Sarah Martin ('The Power Of Three'), the one sung by guitarist Stevie Jackson ('Perfect Couples'), and there *is* something here for early fans: the string-drenched 'The Cat With The Cream' and – in particular – 'Ever Had A Little Faith?', which was written before 1996's debut 'Tigermilk'.

But surprises are sprung at every turn: 'The Power Of Three' is white funk reminiscent of Scottish post-punk forebears Orange Juice and Josef K, 'The Party Line' has tropical disco beats and electro bass and 'Enter Sylvia Plath' is part Saint Etienne, part Pet Shop Boys, and nothing like a song about the heroine of sad sixth-formers. Elsewhere, 'The Everlasting Muse' has jazz verses and a chorus you could break out in a Cossack dance to. The whole album flicks between acoustic and electronic, beat-free and disco banger. It's so scatterbrained and camp, you can almost picture the band rifling through a dressing-up box in the studio. It leaves the feeling that Belle And Sebastian are on the way to something new, even if they haven't quite landed on what it is yet. A very weird album, but a very intriguing one too. ■ DAN STUBBS

7

THREE KEY TRACKS

'The Everlasting Muse'
Stuart Murdoch (frontman): "It ended up sounding a little bit like Eurovision '75 or something. The funny thing is, you kid on about that stuff in interviews but you've got to be careful what you flannel, 'cos it worked!"

'Ever Had A Little Faith?'
Sarah Martin (violin): "We did it a few days after Lou Reed died. The song predates the band; it's a really old one. It came together really quickly and I guess we were in that Velvetsy frame of mind. I really love it."

'Perfect Couples'
Stevie Jackson (guitar): "I can't think of another song that has 'milieu' in it. It's good to add a little something to pop culture. The word 'snacklet' is in there too. My friend Jane made that up. I don't think that's ever been used in a pop song either. 'Milieu' and 'snacklet', there you go. The legacy is secure."

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** January 19 ▶**LABEL** Matador ▶**PRODUCER** Ben H Allen ▶**LENGTH** 61:16 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Nobody's Empire ▶2. Allie ▶3. The Party Line ▶4. The Power Of Three ▶5. The Cat With The Cream ▶6. Enter Sylvia Plath ▶7. The Everlasting Muse ▶8. Perfect Couples ▶9. Ever Had A Little Faith? ▶10. Play For Today ▶11. The Book Of You ▶12. Today (This Army's For Peace) ▶**BEST TRACK** The Cat With The Cream

MORE ALBUMS

Petite Noir
The King Of Anxiety EP
Domino

'Chess', the second track on this debut EP, sets lyrics about a break-up on instant messenger to giant gimmicky beats. Initially it sounds like something you'd hear on hipster-mocking comedy *Nathan Barley*, yet vocals from Yannick Illunga (aka Petite Noir) propel it towards Wild Beasts territory. It's one of five tracks here that showcase the South African's deft touch. 'Shadows' pits intricate guitar patterns against sparse, SBTRKT-style beats, 'Till We Ghosts' deploys joyous oriental rhythms, and 'Come Inside' rips the melody from Gorillaz' 'Dirty Harry' but strips it down to intimate handclaps and call-and-response vocals. Only closer 'The Fall' suffers from a lack of spark. ■ LISA WRIGHT

7

Dark Dark Dark
Flood Tide
Melodic

In 2008, a collective of artists built seven floating artworks and sailed down New York's Hudson River. Minnesota alt-folk ensemble Dark Dark Dark were among them, and their then bassist Todd Chandler documented the trip for 2014 film *Flood Tide*. Now Chandler's ex-bandmates are releasing the soundtrack, full of plucked strings, pretty pianos and old-world accordions. 'Castle' veers like Albuquerque folk band A Hawk And A Hacksaw towards dark, Eastern European abstractions, and 'Quarry' evokes Mogwai's chilling 'Les Revenants' OST. Nona Marie Invie's gutsy vocals finally surface on 'Flood', bringing this challenging journey to a rousing conclusion. ■ ROBERT COOKE

8

NME ALBUM OF THE WEEK

Viet Cong

The Calgary noise band's hard-won experience colours a debut full of bold experimentation

At first, Viet Cong's debut appears to be coming from a dark place. "*If we're lucky we'll get old and die*", sings bassist Matt Flegel on 'Pointless Experience', but context is important: three years after his former Women bandmate Christopher Reimer died tragically at 26, it's equally plausible that Flegel is instead fetishising the ageing process. The Calgary noise band are completed by ex-Women drummer Mike Wallace plus guitarists Scott Munro and Danny Christiansen, so they haven't quite ripped it up and started again. Fans of Women's challenging melodies will appreciate the songcraft here, but Viet Cong are very much their own animal; with deep forays into demonic white noise ('Continental Shelf'), clanging post-punk ('Silhouettes') and psychedelic/prog rock on sprawling closer 'Death', they're expanding into adventurous new directions. Best of all is 'March Of Progress', which starts out as a brooding industrial throb before turning on its heel at the halfway point and racing off to a hinterland of glorious, chiming beauty. ■ ROB WEBB

8

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** January 19 ▶**LABEL** Jagjaguwar ▶**PRODUCER** Graham Walsh ▶**LENGTH** 37:03 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Newspaper Spoons ▶2. Pointless Experience ▶3. March Of Progress ▶4. Bunker Buster ▶5. Continental Shelf ▶6. Silhouettes ▶7. Death ▶**BEST TRACK** March Of Progress

Jib Kidder
Teaspoon To The Ocean
Weird World

Georgian musician Sean Schuster-Craig's 13th album as Jib Kidder is a buoyant record that should widen his audience, up to now largely confined to his Bandcamp page – a trove of gently weird psychedelia. 'In Between' bounces giddily, a sun-speckled collision between Panda Bear and Real Estate, and 'Dozens' packs squiggly effects and skittering drums under soft guitar that recalls Creation band The Telescopes. Schuster-Craig indulges in weirder, more plaintive moments, too: 'Illustration' and 'Melt Me' boast irregular melodies underpinned by patient rhythms. Getting lost in the depths of the latter provides the album's highlight. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

Reviews

Man Without Country
Maximum Entropy
Lost Balloon

A ripple of space-age noise at the start of 'Claymation', 'Maximum Entropy"s first track, heralds 60 minutes of swooshing, ambitious electronica. There are big ideas behind Cardiff duo Man Without Country's second album, but unfortunately their songcraft can't consistently find space for them. The opener is undone by grating whined vocals. 'Entropy' fares better, powered by a deep drone and drums that pop and thunder, and lead single 'Laws Of Motion' – easily the best thing here – prances like School Of Seven Bells and features vocals from M83 singer Morgan Kibby. Thereafter, though, 'Maximum Entropy', for all its electronic flourishes, fizzles into forgettable wispiness. **5**

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

Mac DeMarco
2/Salad Days Demos
Captured Tracks

Given his fondness for toilet humour and hard-rock covers, it's understandable that the murky world of DeMarco's demos might not sound as appealing as the splendour of his records. But these sketches from 2012's '2' and 2014's 'Salad Days', released together for the first time, are sweet and hazy treasures. The downbeat, treacle-thick 'Goodbye Weekend' is even woozier than its 'Salad Days' counterpart. And if most of the '2' demos sound like ramshackle takes on the finished tracks, there's always the trippy, instrumental melancholia of 'Pepperoni Playboy' and 'Potato Boy': even with half-baked ideas, Mac's got the knack of making you want to stay in his weird world forever. **7**

■ BEN HEWITT

Marilyn Manson
The Pale Emperor

The biggest surprise on the new album from the 'God of Fuck' is that we see more of the real Manson than before

Once the sultan of shock, the Marilyn Manson who greets us in 2015 cuts a different figure. Late last year, the 45-year-old Brian Warner was forced to clarify that a leaked video by filmmaker Eli Roth – which apparently depicted Lana Del Rey as a victim of sexual assault – was not a creation of his making. This felt somewhat uncharacteristic: in the past Manson has revelled in the role of bogeyman, sucking in society's ills like a thirsty black hole. Of course, there's a dark morality at the heart of Manson's music: it's all a way of pointing out the hypocrisy of our self-appointed guardians. But to be forced to admit that out loud? It's to endanger everything that makes Manson, well, *Manson*.

'The Pale Emperor' runs the same risk. Manson's ninth album shows little sign of contrivance or concept. Made with the screen composer Tyler Bates, whom Manson met on the set of US comedy drama *Californication* (where Manson played himself), it finds its maker in soul-baring mood. There are bursts of belligerent stadium glam that hark back to 1996's *Antichrist Superstar*, but more common is a bleak, bluesy rock that splits the difference between Bauhaus, The Bad Seeds and *True Detective*. Opener 'Killing Strangers', a sleazy chain-gang stomp, would sound at home leaking from the speakers of some greasy dive bar as dull-eyed strippers twirl listlessly on poles.

At its worst, 'The Pale Emperor' feels grey and humourless. 'The Mephistopheles Of Los Angeles' is wheezy hair metal, while the dour 'Third Day Of A Seven Day Binge' channels 'Lust For Life'-era Iggy but makes hedonism sound like hard labour. Actually, it's the glimpses of blues that prove perversely exciting: the Stones shimmy of 'The Devil Beneath My Feet'; or 'Birds Of Hell Awaiting', which mixes squalling slide guitar with a riff like 'The Beautiful People' on hillbilly heroin. It's no classic, but perhaps the surprise here is that Manson's music can work without the shock shtick. Being a wicked voice in the wilderness, it turns out, quite suits him. **6**

■ LOUIS PATTISON

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** January 19 ▶**LABEL** Cooking Vinyl ▶**LENGTH** 52:13 ▶**PRODUCERS** Marilyn Manson/Tyler Bates ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Killing Strangers ▶2. Deep Six ▶3. Third Day Of A Seven Day Binge ▶4. The Mephistopheles Of Los Angeles ▶5. Warship My Wreck ▶6. Slave Only Dreams To Be King ▶7. The Devil Beneath My Feet ▶8. Birds Of Hell Awaiting ▶9. Cupid Carries A Gun ▶10. Odds Of Even ▶**BEST TRACK** Killing Strangers

Taman Shud
Viper Smoke Trashmouth

"Taman Shud is not 'about' working in a fucking office, it is about blood, sex and evil. We are a magical weapon against tedium," states one missive posted by the London quartet – who released an EP with Fat White Family in 2013 – on their Facebook page. Debut album 'Viper Smoke' goes some way to backing up that claim; an unholy combination of ghoulish moaning, the blackest strands of psychedelia and nightmarish song titles ('The Hex Inverted', 'The Hissing Priest's Remains'). On 'I Tego Arcana Dei' (Latin for 'bury the mysteries of God') a howling barrage of jagged guitars splices through rumbling bass and gloomy vocals, before 'Book Of Lies' slows to a reflective pace, and sounds even more cultish for it. Brilliantly terrifying. **8**

■ RHIAN DALY

The Decemberists
What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World
Rough Trade

In 2005, thanks to the ironically jaunty anti-Iraq War protest song '16 Military Wives' from third album 'Picaresque', The Decemberists were an essential voice in American indie rock. In the decade since, life's happened to the Portland quintet – kids, etc – and record seven's focus is firmly inward. A lot of 'What A Terrible World...' sounds like a band enjoying their job: accordions dance on 'Better Not Wake The Baby', and singer Colin Meloy gives it the full Morrissey on 'Philomena' ("*All I wanted in the world was just to live to see a naked girl/But I found I quickly bored*"). But moments such as 'Mistral"s opening gambit of "*We already wrecked the rental car*" will ultimately test the patience of all but the seriously devoted. **6**

■ TOM HOWARD

Reviews

Meat Wave
Brother EP Brace Yourself

"You're not my brother/ You're just another mother-fucker's brother", snarls Chris Sutter on the rapid-fire title track from Meat Wave's follow-up to their 2012 self-titled debut album. Given the combination of such cold sentiments and the album's battering-ram riffs, it'd be easy to write off the group as angsty and miserable. Dig a little deeper, though, and there are bright moments to be had. 'Mystery', originally by seminal Portland punks Wipers, is a moment of metallic sparkle among the sludgy grunge, and the grubby racket of 'The Truth' sounds happier, Sutter singing *"You're wonderful/ Yeah, I'm wonderful"* like a man who's getting his issues all worked out. ■ RHIAN DALY **8**

Funeral For A Friend
Chapter And Verse
Distiller

Funeral For A Friend will have to do better than gargling over muted Biffy riffs to make their hard rock interesting. This seventh album is as 'gnarly' as a high-school band of Black Flag-shirted, combat-shorted San Diegan 13-year-olds. Drums pummel and guitars noodle muddily, as everything between 'Pencil Pusher' and 'Donny' merges into a swamp of antiquated thrash. The politics are well-meaning but trite – *"Born with a dick/Doesn't mean that I'm a misogynist"* howls Matthew Davies-Kreye on 'You Should Be Ashamed Of Yourself' – while the arguments of '1%' and 'Inequality' are so fuzzy and deeply buried that the government bigwigs FFAF are gunning for wouldn't be able to hear them even if they wanted to. Hardcore landfill. ■ MARK BEAUMONT **3**

Amen Dunes
Cowboy Worship EP
Sacred Bones

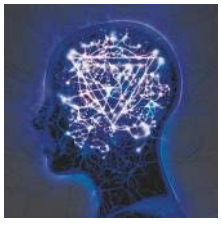
'Love', Damon McMahon's fourth Amen Dunes album, was one of 2014's most luscious records. New EP 'Cowboy Worship' – with the addition of two extra musicians, Stephen Tanner of '90s experimentalists Harvey Milk and Ben Greenberg from New York punks The Men – features new interpretations of four 'Love' tracks, a delicate cover of Tim Buckley's 'Song To The Siren' and a new recording of 'Lezzy Head (Burial)', from 2011's 'Through Donkey Jaw'. 'I Know Myself (Montreal)' revitalises the album version with warped acoustic guitar and brass, and Tanner adds foreboding guitar noise to a narcotic 'Green Eyes (Music Blues)'. But the rich piano on 'Love (Montreal)' is best, crowning an EP that expands on the wealth of ideas McMahon put into 'Love'. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD **8**

Enter Shikari
The Mindsweep

The St Albans band mix musical mayhem with in-your-face politics on their fourth album

Over the course of 12 years and three albums, Enter Shikari have spewed heavily politicised, in-your-face rhetoric over an uncompromising blend of post-hardcore, metal and trance. It's served them well. The St Albans four-piece's fiery invective and intense live shows inspire devotion from fans, and it's seen them rise from Hertfordshire's DIY underground to the Top Five of the UK album chart with 2012's 'A Flash Flood Of Colour'.

Fourth album 'The Mindsweep' – the title refers to "those in power withholding or discrediting new ideas" – sounds just as powerful as its predecessors. It's dominated, as usual, by frontman Rou Reynolds' distinctive vocals, forcefully ramming home his lyrics.



The record is bookended by two particularly harsh showcases – 'The Appeal & The Mindsweep I' and 'The Appeal & The Mindsweep II' – which see him explode into shouts of *"I am a mindsweeper/Focus on me!"*. But he is flexible, and flits between styles. The record's most rabble-rousing moment comes on 'The Last Garrison', when he spits *"Can you hear the war cry?"* as unruly guitars clash with thudding beats. He's at his most direct, though, on 'Anaesthetist', an impassioned tirade against the privatisation of the NHS. *"You will not profit off our health"* he screams, as the song booms to breakneck speed in a flurry of electronic effects.

Elsewhere, Enter Shikari's mix of politics and extreme sound makes their vitriol hard to follow. The pseudo-intellectual rap of 'Never Let Go Of The Microscope' – *"Like Socrates I only graze on the slopes of the summit of my own ignorance"* – feels more like parody than political activism. The dislocated rhythms of 'There's A Price On Your Head' are more irritating than incendiary, the song's fury lost in the tired-sounding nu-metal thrash. 'Dear Future Historians...' is unexpectedly fragile, but its tender melody sticks out as a bizarre and schmaltzy interlude amid the relentless pace and volume.

It's a shame that on 'The Mindsweep', Shikari's message is occasionally lost in the madness. But they clearly believe music can inspire change, and this country needs bands like them to shake people out of their political apathy. ■ MISCHA PEARLMAN **7**

▶THE DETAILS

▶**RELEASE DATE** January 19 ▶**LABEL** PIAS ▶**PRODUCER** Dan Weller ▶**LENGTH** 45:04 ▶**TRACKLISTING** ▶1. The Appeal & The Mindsweep I ▶2. The One True Colour ▶3. Anaesthetist ▶4. The Last Garrison ▶5. Never Let Go Of The Microscope ▶6. Myopia ▶7. Torn Apart ▶8. Interlude ▶9. The Bank Of England ▶10. There's A Price On Your Head ▶11. Dear Future Historians... ▶12. The Appeal & The Mindsweep II ▶**BEST TRACK** Anaesthetist

Hanni El Khatib
Moonlight Innovative Leisure

Perhaps inspired by accusations of coming off like a poor man's White Stripes or Black Keys (not helped by Dan Auerbach producing his 2013 second album, 'Head In The Dirt'), LA's Hanni El Khatib has broadened his sonic palette on album three to include soul, disco and soft rock. The record feels tighter and more louche, but too many songs concern his struggles with women ('Moonlight', 'Melt Me', 'Dance Hall') and he's sometimes creepy – *"I'm chasin' after you, even if you don't want me to"* ('Chasin''). The tiresome 'Worship Song (No.2)' tackles the difficulties of saving money and it's not until closer, 'Two Brothers' – about the death of two friends – that he manages to reach beyond the mundane. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE **5**

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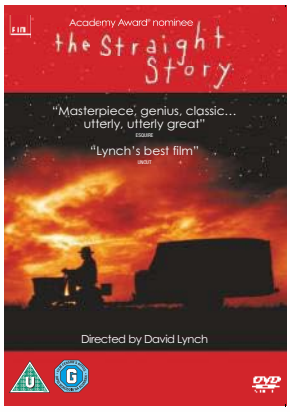
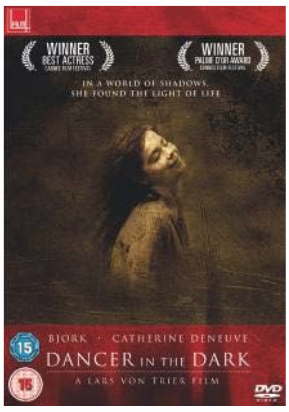
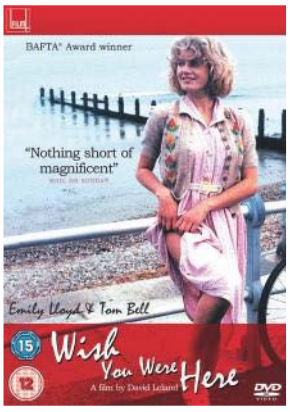
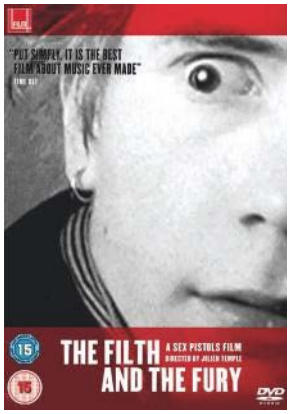
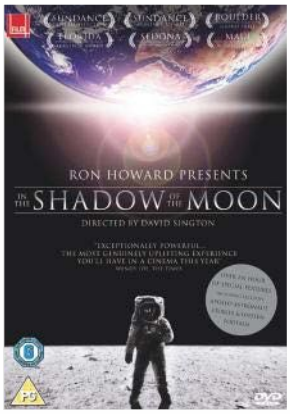
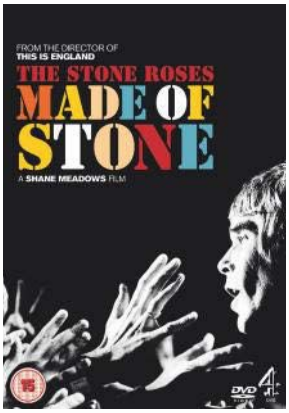


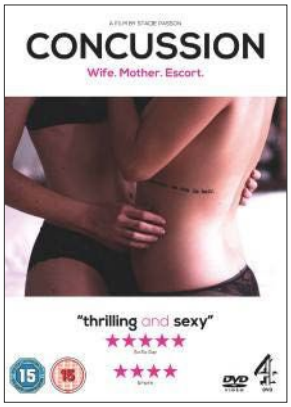

WINNER BEST ACTRESS
WINNER PALME D'OR AWARD
IN A WORLD OF SHADOWS, SHE FOUND THE LIGHT OF LIFE
BJORK · CATHERINE DENEUVE
DANCER IN THE DARK
A LARS VON TRIER FILM

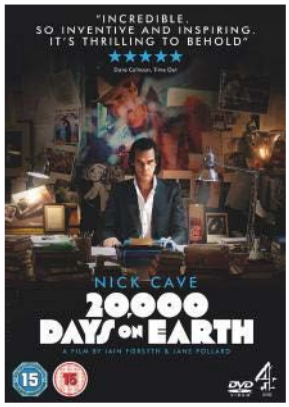


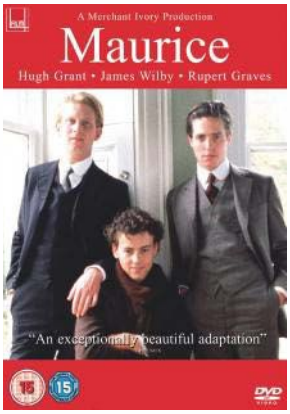












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FILM

Wild

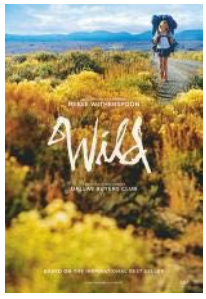
Reese Witherspoon excels as a woman who hikes to battle heroin abuse and sex addiction

Cheryl Strayed is a daily heroin user and possible sex addict whose spiral of self-destruction following her mother's death ruins her marriage. Jobless, friendless and devastated by divorce, she embarks on a 1,100-mile hike along the Pacific Crest Trail to obliterate her demons. *Wild* – based on Strayed's bestselling 2012 memoir *Wild: From Lost To Found On The Pacific Crest Trail* and directed by Jean-Marc Vallée (*Dallas Buyers Club*) – tells her story.

Reese Witherspoon plays Cheryl, who begins her 94-day slog in the boiling Mojave Desert with not much more than powdered mashed potato to sustain her, and later takes in snow-capped Sierra Nevada and the rainier terrain of Oregon and the Washington State border. As she battles everything the trail throws at her – from the chronic loneliness that causes a breakdown in the desert, to a terrifying encounter with a threatening pervert – the 38-year-old combines vulnerability and determination to bring this troubling tale to life.

Documenting Strayed's ordeal became a passion for Witherspoon, who bought the rights to the book and helped develop the film through her production company, Pacific Standard. The script by *About A Boy* and *High Fidelity* author Nick Hornby ensures this road to redemption avoids any claggy cheesiness, and remains gritty throughout. In steering away from cheap one-liners, Hornby uses the dialogue to fully expose Cheryl's less appealing traits.

Wild delves into her psyche via a series of revealing flashbacks. They are uncomfortable, milkily lit scenes of physical and emotional abuse – including one particularly shocking moment when she is dead-eyed and strung out in a squat after a drug-fuelled orgy – that contribute to her growing feelings of guilt. In one flashback, we see Cheryl murdering a beloved family pet, despite promising her dying parent she would care for it.



▶DIRECTOR
Jean-Marc Vallée
▶IN CINEMAS
January 16

Witherspoon is commanding and impressive throughout, but plays this harrowing and distressing scene particularly believably. Following a succession of fluffy performances in rom-coms such as 2010's *How Do You Know* and 2012's *This Means War*, Wild represents Witherspoon's most impressive role since 2005's Oscar-winning turn as June Carter Cash in *Walk The Line*.

Alongside Witherspoon is Laura Dern (*Blue Velvet*, *Jurassic Park*), who shines in her few scenes as Barbara, Cheryl's sweet, optimistic mother. In one, Cheryl – who, we are led to believe, is better educated than her mother – mocks Barbara for reading lowbrow books. Barbara replies that she always wanted Cheryl to be better than her, but that she didn't expect it to sting so much.

It's the performances by the pair of them that really make *Wild* special. ■ NICK LEVINE

8

CINEMA
American Sniper

A Texan with an indomitable sense of right and wrong, Chris Kyle joined the Navy Seals after terrorists bombed American embassies in the 1990s. Kyle killed over 160 people during four tours of duty as a sniper in Iraq, but struggled with guilt when he returned – not about the deaths, but because, back in America, he wasn't able to protect his fellow troops. Clint Eastwood directs this biopic with precision and economy, no scene a frame longer than necessary. At its heart is an exceptional performance by Bradley Cooper, who beefed up both physically and emotionally to become the intense, bear-like Kyle. Wisely, both men allow us to make up our own minds about this troubling, complicated chapter in recent history. ■ ANGUS BATEY

7

CINEMA
Point And Shoot

Following his role as executive producer of The National's *Mistaken For Strangers* film in 2013, filmmaker Marshall Curry's latest documentary tells the strange story of Matt VanDyke. The directionless 27-year-old from Baltimore embarked on a "crash course in manhood" that began with a 35,000-mile motorcycle ride around northern Africa and ended in armed combat when VanDyke became an unlikely fighter in the 2011 civil war in Libya that ousted Colonel Gaddafi. VanDyke filmed his entire trip, and provides an extensive and candid interview. But because Curry fails to ask obvious questions – for example, did VanDyke ever feel selfish leaving his family behind? – the film ultimately proves unsatisfying. ■ NICK LEVINE

6

CINEMA
Testament Of Youth

This adaptation of Vera Brittain's bestselling 1933 World War I memoir of the same name has plenty to recommend it. Emerging Swedish actress Alicia Vikander, who starred in Oscar-nominated Danish film *A Royal Affair* in 2012, delivers a sensitive, intelligent performance as Brittain, a headstrong Derbyshire girl who postponed her Oxford education to nurse wounded soldiers in France. Director James Kent's film also boasts impeccable period production values and a classy supporting cast, including *The Wire*'s Dominic West as Brittain's father and *Game Of Thrones*' Kit Harington as her fiancé fighting on the front line. Sadly, because some of her tragic story's most harrowing moments feel a bit rushed, this handsome and well-acted film is less affecting than it could have been. ■ NICK LEVINE

7

CINEMA
Duck Soup

Showing as part of this month's Marx Brothers season at London's BFI Cinema, *Duck Soup* was the last of five films starring Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo to be produced by Paramount. Released in 1933, this joyous spoof still resounds as a classic, defined by frantic camerawork, cacophonous ensemble scenes and relentless puns. When Groucho's Rufus T Firefly is made president of the fictional Freedonia, he is insulted by neighbouring Sylvania's ambassador, leading to war. Along the way the Brothers share jokey wordplay ("Mice don't play music." "No? How about the old maestro?") and a long scene in which they mimic each other in a broken mirror. Conducted in deathly silence, the latter is the film's best moment. ■ BEN HOMEWOOD

8

NME GIG OF THE WEEK

Drenge

Picture House Social, Sheffield

Saturday, December 20

Drenge's Rory (left) and Eoin Loveless

Eoin and Rory unveil chaotic, unruly new songs at their first show as a trio

PHOTO BY ANDY HUGHES

In an underground bar in Sheffield's Antiques Quarter, Drenge's second coming has sparked a frenzy. Eoin and Rory Loveless announced their first show as a three-piece – with former Wet Nuns frontman Rob Graham playing bass – this morning. Now, the fans jammed into this tiny room are going batshit to debut single 'Bloodsports', trampling balloons and causing carnage. Graham's snarling basslines and drummer Rory's manic fills beef up newer songs like 'The Snake' and 'Running Wild' brilliantly. Choppy and chaotic respectively, both tracks are likely to appear on their new album this year. Tonight's newest track (working title 'Diyafa', after a takeaway in town) sees Eoin's searing guitar melodies crash into an unruly chorus. The Loveless brothers have only just moved to Sheffield from their parents' house in Derbyshire. A few more shows like this and they'll be worshipped as hometown heroes. ■ ROBERT COOKE

8

The Cure

Hammersmith Apollo, London
Tuesday, December 23

The goth pioneers veer between meandering psychedelia and masterful pop in a marathon 41-song set

Like five thousand spider-haired Bear Grylls, The Cure's diehards dig in for the long haul. They've seen the band play sets lasting longer than the average Wagnerian Ring Cycle before, and they've checked out the setlists for the two previous nights of this three-date run online. Forty-one songs, four substantial encores, a show that cackles in the face of curfews and its proposed two-and-a-half-hour running time. They stock up on supplies – copious lager, nutrition-free energy bars, emergency uppers to get them through the bleaker stretches of 'One Hundred Years' – and gently sway and chatter through the first 20 minutes, easing themselves carefully into a gloom-filled night that they know will be a marathon, not a sprint.

One man's Frightmare Before Christmas, of course, is another's Winter Wonderland, and you have to hand it to Robert Smith for sticking so firmly to The Cure's expansive ethos. They're a band who've had a swampload of hits and could easily fill a lean 90 minutes with some of the best and most sophisticated pop moments of the past 35 years. But they're also a band of epic eras and exploratory movements, and the 55-year-old Smith indulges the faithful by revisiting them in full. In 2002 they performed their goth-forging trilogy of 'Pornography', 'Disintegration' and 'Bloodflowers' over three nights, and at 2011's Reflections shows they played their first three albums in order every night. 2014 moves the story on to the transitional, psychedelic pop period of the mid-'80s; tonight Smith dots every song from 1984's post-'Lovecats' lost album 'The Top' throughout the set. 'The Top', for the uninitiated, was something of an unfocused experimental blip that shifted The Cure in the direction of the otherwise empirical run of '80s pop crackers 'The Head On The Door' and 'Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me' – its highlight and only single was the itchy tongue-twister 'The Caterpillar', and until 2011 Smith didn't even play that for 20 years. So it's not exactly Pixies doing 'Doolittle'.

That four of its 10 tracks are trotted out in the first 40 minutes, kicking off with 'the grungy synth-rock of 'Shake Dog Shake' and taking in the discordant prog of 'Wailing Wall' and the dull, ponderous harmonica horrorcore of 'Bananafishbones', hobbles the show from the start, even with 'The Walk' adding a dash of funk noir and rarity 'A Man Inside My Mouth' keeping the obscurists on their pixie-booted toes. Then, Smith stops his wonky dancing for a second, remembers he's one of the greatest songwriters in the history of rock'n'roll, and bashes out a central hour of hits that makes modern alt-pop take a long, hard look at itself, develop a crippling inadequacy complex, stop going out, distance itself from family and friends, style its hair like an exploding crow, start reading Camus and torturing stray cats and eventually throw itself under someone else's train.

SETLIST

- ▶Shake Dog Shake
- ▶Kyoto Song
- ▶A Night Like This
- ▶Wailing Wall
- ▶The Caterpillar
- ▶The Walk
- ▶Sleep When I'm Dead
- ▶A Man Inside My Mouth
- ▶Bananafishbones
- ▶Push
- ▶In Between Days
- ▶Friday I'm In Love
- ▶Doing The Unstuck
- ▶Pictures Of You
- ▶Lullaby
- ▶Birdmad Girl
- ▶Lovesong
- ▶Just Like Heaven
- ▶Like Cockatoos
- ▶From the Edge Of The Deep Green Sea
- ▶Want
- ▶One Hundred Years
- ▶Give Me It
- ▶The Empty World
- ▶Charlotte Sometimes
- ▶Primary
- ▶The Top
- ▶Three Imaginary Boys
- ▶M
- ▶Play For Today
- ▶A Forest
- ▶Piggy In The Mirror
- ▶Never Enough
- ▶Fascination Street
- ▶Wrong Number
- ▶Dressing Up
- ▶The Lovecats
- ▶Close To Me
- ▶Why Can't I Be You?
- ▶Boys Don't Cry
- ▶Hey You!

THE HITS SLITHER AND SOAR THROUGH TALES OF HEARTBREAK, OBSESSION AND ECSTASY

'In Between Days', 'Friday I'm In Love' and 'Doing The Unstuck' – in which Smith squeals "*let's get happy!*" like some evil imp king dishing out antidepressants – shake the crowd awake; 'Pictures Of You', 'Lullaby', 'Lovesong' and 'Just Like Heaven' slither and soar through tales of heartbreak, obsession and ecstasy, the sound of pop trying on elegant Venetian mood-masks.

Then the neat, 90-minute main set wraps up with a five-song wallow in The Cure's doomy depths – 'From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea', 'One Hundred Years', 'Want' – and we're ready for one final run of classics – 'The Lovecats'! 'Close To Me'! 'Why Can't I Be You?'! 'Boys Don't Cry'! – to send us wafting enigmatically away into the mists of night swearing The Cure made the music of the gods. An hour later, we get it.

JORRDAN HUGHES

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD

Kaley, 21, Colchester
"I absolutely loved it! That was the first Cure gig I've ever been to and it didn't disappoint!"

Lindsey, 22, Colchester
"When they sang 'Close To Me' – that's my all-time favourite Cure song and in my Top 10 favourite songs – it was just phenomenonal. It was like the album there in front of you but even better."

Alex, 35, Birmingham
"It was wicked. I saw them at the Brit Awards in 1991 playing 'Never Enough' and they blew me away, and since then I've been hooked."

Sam, 21, Islington
"It was amazing. I was here last night too but this was so much better. 'Pictures Of You' is a personal favourite."

Unfortunately, there are three other encores and 13 torturous tracks in-between, mostly from 'The Top', that make the set's second half feel interminable. 'The Empty World' trudges along full of military marching beats and battle flutes, 'The Top' is all unbearably boring Floydisms and 'Piggy In The Middle' couldn't feel more bloated if Peter Jackson had directed it. So when that fourth encore of back-to-back smashes finally arrives it's guzzled up with exhausted relief rather than euphoria, like finding an all-you-can-eat barbecue buffet at the end of a marriage to Gwyneth Paltrow.

Tonight Smith stretches the set to 41 songs ("because it's Christmas"), but the final 'Hey You!' feels less like a treat, more like one last twist of the thumbscrews. It's tough to believe that a gig featuring so many incredible songs could end up so arduous, but The Cure are well-versed in testing the outer limits of fandom and tonight provides a precise breaking point. ■ MARK BEAUMONT

7

MORE GIGS

Smith Westerns
Chicago, Lincoln Hall
Tuesday, December 23

"We are Smith Westerns from Chicago," says Cullen Omori, before slashing through the punk charge of 'Dreams', the first track from the trio's 2009 debut album, one final time. Following the announcement of their break-up earlier in December, this hometown show is the band's last headline appearance. With guitarist Max Kakacek absent, frontman Cullen and his bassist brother Cameron play alongside stand-ins on guitar and drums and zip excitably through glam-tinged early fare ('Be My Girl'), emphatic pop choruses ('Weekend, 'Varsity') and, pointedly, a dreamy new solo cut from Cullen. Even without Kakacek, the set hinges on shining melodies and cool swagger. Far from melancholy, Smith Westerns' farewell is a joyous celebration. ■ DAN HYMAN

8

The Magic Gang
London, Old Blue Last
Tuesday, January 6

Two verses into opener 'Babylon' and there's already a crowdsurfer rolling across the front rows. The Magic Gang are yet to release so much as a single, but the Old Blue Last is at breaking point. With the goofy group shouts of 'You Don't Want Me', the Brighton quartet come on like early Weezer, and their effortless choruses invite bleary singalongs. By 'She Won't Ghost', the whole crowd has arms aloft. An untitled newie builds on a lilting riff and shows they can polish things up too. By the end the crowdsurfer has returned and everyone else is yelling for an encore, which comes in the form of the prickly 'Shallow'. ■ LISA WRIGHT

8

Superfood

Koko, London
Wednesday, December 31

The Birmingham party animals start 2015 with a Queen cover and a Harry Koisser guest spot

Exactly 12 months ago, Superfood were onstage in this ornate Camden theatre supporting Wolf Alice. Tonight, they're stepping up as headliners, capping a year that's seen them release a gleeful debut album in 'Don't Say That', bring venues crashing down (the ceiling collapsed at London's KPH in July) and spread their joyous indie-pop across the country on tour.

On New Year's Eve – a night perfect for the Birmingham quartet's contagious party spirit – they're out to rattle Koko's rafters. A projector screen showing images of fireworks sparkling over Big Ben slowly rolls up to reveal the Birmingham quartet waiting to get 2015 underway. Opener 'You Can Believe' sets off the heaving dancefloor, balloons lingering from the midnight countdown popping in the melée, 'Like A Daisy' wobbles with a fitting drunkenness and 'Don't Say That' is a thundering, slinky thrill powered by creeping bass funk from Emily Baker. Hinging on some delirious riffing, 'Mood Bomb' careens quickly into 'Right On Satellite', during which frontman Dom Ganderton bellows, "*Keep it real, get high/Keep it real, you're my satellite*".

SETLIST

▶You Can Believe
▶Bubbles
▶Melting
▶Like A Daisy
▶Good To See You
▶Don't Say That
▶Mood Bomb
▶Right On Satellite
▶TV
▶Superfood
▶Bohemian Rhapsody

As the punchy 'Superfood' comes to an end, Emily hauls off her guitar, ready to head offstage, only for the grinning frontman to announce one final song. They tear into a jubilant rendition of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody', wheeling out Peace's Harry Koisser on guitar to shred through its searing solo. At its roaring peak, they split onto the stairs at opposite sides of the stage before racing back to meet each other in the middle. With Koko united in arms-aloft ecstasy, party masters Superfood depart, their mission complete. ■ RHIAN DALY

8

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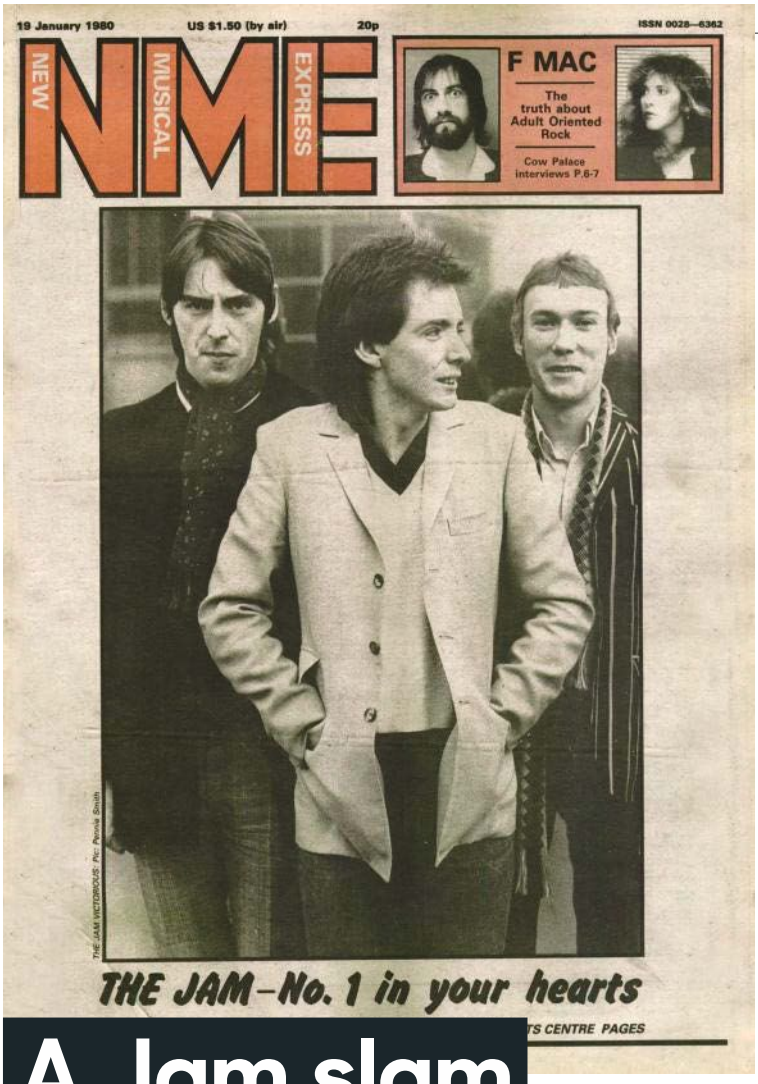

A Jam slam

The Woking wonders dominate the NME readers' poll as they celebrate their biggest hit yet

The Jam sweep the board in the annual *NME* readers' poll, as Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler are voted Best Songwriter, Best Bassist and Best Drummer respectively. They also pick up Best Band overall and Best Album for 'Setting Sons'. "I'm really pleased," says Weller with characteristic coolness. "Let's hope that now we've swept out all those bands like Genesis and Led Zeppelin, the poll winners will keep on changing. It's good if they keep changing every year, as long as they're being replaced by something better."

The Woking wonders are also riding high on the success of recent single 'The Eton Rifles'. "I thought that was really different," says Weller. "How many singles get to Number Three in the chart with loads of chaotic noise at the beginning?" Meanwhile, the band are in the studio recording their next single 'Going Underground', avoiding the rapidly disintegrating punk scene. "The sense of unity went the minute the bands all got signed up," he says.

PENNIE SMITH

THE MAC PACK

Fleetwood Mac are now US rock royalty thanks to the sale of 20 million copies of 'Rumours' in 1977. The follow-up, 'Tusk', was the first album to cost $1 million to record – not that they're wasting money with any destructive on-the-road antics. "There's a lot of waste of talent that starts up and just fizzles out," drummer Mick Fleetwood tells *NME*'s Chris Salewicz. "You just see the spark of something and then they all start throwing TVs out of the windows."

DIAL M FOR MUZIK

Danny Baker meets Robin Scott, the man behind M and their robotic hit 'Pop Muzik', at the National Gallery to talk about the art of pop. "Pop music is the muzak now," Scott says. "I mean after the Pistols I couldn't see what there was left to do except make these observations... It's like the old colonials going out into the colonies and picking up a palm tree and a few trophies. It's a melting pot, a synthesis. That's how I understand pop music."

REVIEWED THIS WEEK

Aerosmith – 'Night In The Ruts'

"Stupid, dirty rock'n'roll. File alongside Foreigner's 'Dirty White Boy' as the punkiest music to come out of America in 1979." ■ PHIL McNEILL

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

▶The Stranglers have decided to continue with their live plans despite singer Hugh Cornwell being sentenced to eight weeks in prison on drugs charges.

▶Elvis Costello & The Attractions' cover of Sam And Dave's 'I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down' is awarded Single Of The Week. "I'd listened to it standing up, falling down – even on the radio – before the message sank in," writes reviewer Max Bell.

▶ *The Amityville Horror* gets a shoeing from film reviewer Neil Norman: "As an ordinary horror film, it's above average."

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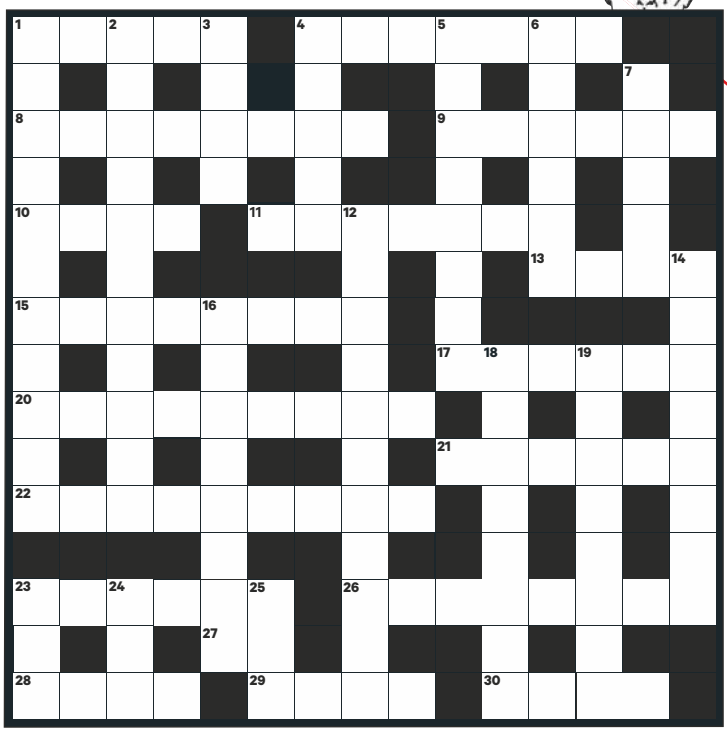

CLUES ACROSS

1+4A Chris Martin either gave us a 'Shiver' or got his sets mixed up (5-7)
8 Pearl Jam album with energy (8)
9 Post-punk band who advised us 'Papa's Got A Brand New _____' (6)
10+11A I get Barry in, somehow, to performance by Gallows (4-7)
13 Her albums include 'Shepherd Moons' and 'A Day Without Rain' (4)
15 Go cold on The Black Keys' music (4-4)
17 A piece of vinyl from Alex Chilton's Big Star (6)
20 *"Boys in the girls' room, girls in the men's room"*, Garbage (9)
21+25D Present yourselves presently to Oasis (2-4-3)
22+29A Looking to get a blast from The War On Drugs (4-2-3-4)
23 US record company founded in 1959 by Berry Gordy (6)
26 '80s alt-rockers The Godfathers had covered this '60s hit by daybreak (3-5)
27 Disagreement by They Might Be Giants over this album (2)
28 (See 16 down)
29 (See 22 across)
30+3D Their singles in the '80s included 'It's My Life' and 'Life's What You Make It' (4-4)

CLUES DOWN

1 Maximo Park with an award we understand they will accept (4-3-4)
2 (See 7 down)
3 (See 30 across)
4 Editors not to your taste? You might have to lump them (5)
5 It was just the same again with this Fugazi album (8)
6 An instrument with power used on album by American Music Club (6)
7+2D Jamie T's resentment at starring alongside Sid James? (5-2-3-6)
12 His nice tune turned into a number by Status Quo (3-2-3-3)
14 Those in the theatre to hear a Cold War Kids number (8)
16+28A Their first Top 10 hit went 'Like Clockwork' (8-4)
18 Huge connection between Tame Impala and The White Stripes (8)
19 This was just too much of a performance from Motörhead (8)
23 A bit of remorse shown by Blur (3)
24 Explosive stuff on albums by both Tortoise and AC/DC (1-1-1)
25 (See 21 across)

JANUARY 3 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 A Better Tomorrow, 9 Get Away, 10+20D Girls On Film, 11 Luna, 12 Sit Down, 14+25D God Is A DJ, 16 Flowerpot Men, 18+23A Arnold Layne, 19 Reef, 21 Ann, 25 Iha, 27 Light, 29+3D Sam's Town, 30 Mouthwash, 31 Lodi, 32 Queen, 33 Just, 34 MWNG
DOWN 1 Angel Of Harlem, 2 Elton John, 4 Röyksopp, 5 Ought, 6 Our Love, 8 Wanted, 13 Tell Me When, 15 Omen, 17+7D The Rising, 24+22D You're Nothing, 26 Ashes, 28 Islam

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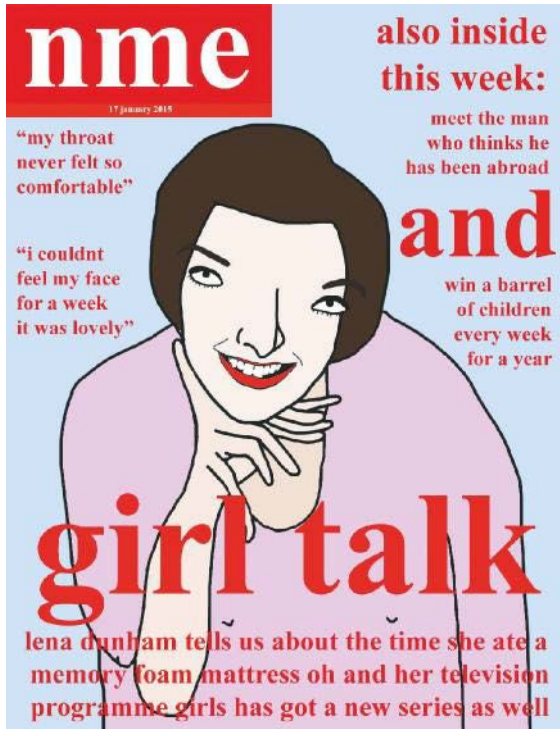
THE NME COVER THAT I GONE AND DONE

■ by CHRIS SIMPSONS ARTIST


nme
17 January 2015
also inside this week:
meet the man who thinks he has been abroad
and
win a barrel of children every week for a year
"my throat never felt so comfortable"
"i couldnt feel my face for a week it was lovely"
girl talk
lena dunham tells us about the time she ate a memory foam mattress oh and her television programme girls has got a new series as well

NEXT WEEK

THE 100 ALBUMS YOU NEED TO HEAR IN 2015

PART 1

On sale Wednesday, January 21

NME

ALSO IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

ALBUM REVIEWS

- Pond
- All We Are
- Joey Bada$$
- Mark Ronson

CAUGHT LIVE

- Royal Blood
- Bad Breeding
- Panda Bear
- Savages
- Joanna Gruesome

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